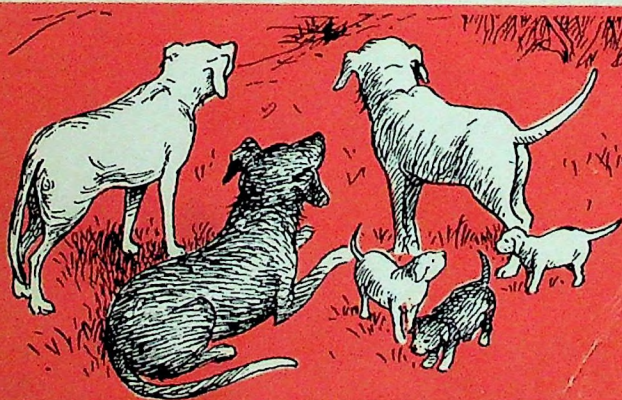




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Ubulumko Bezinja

RUSTUM SIYONGWANA



African Studies Seminar

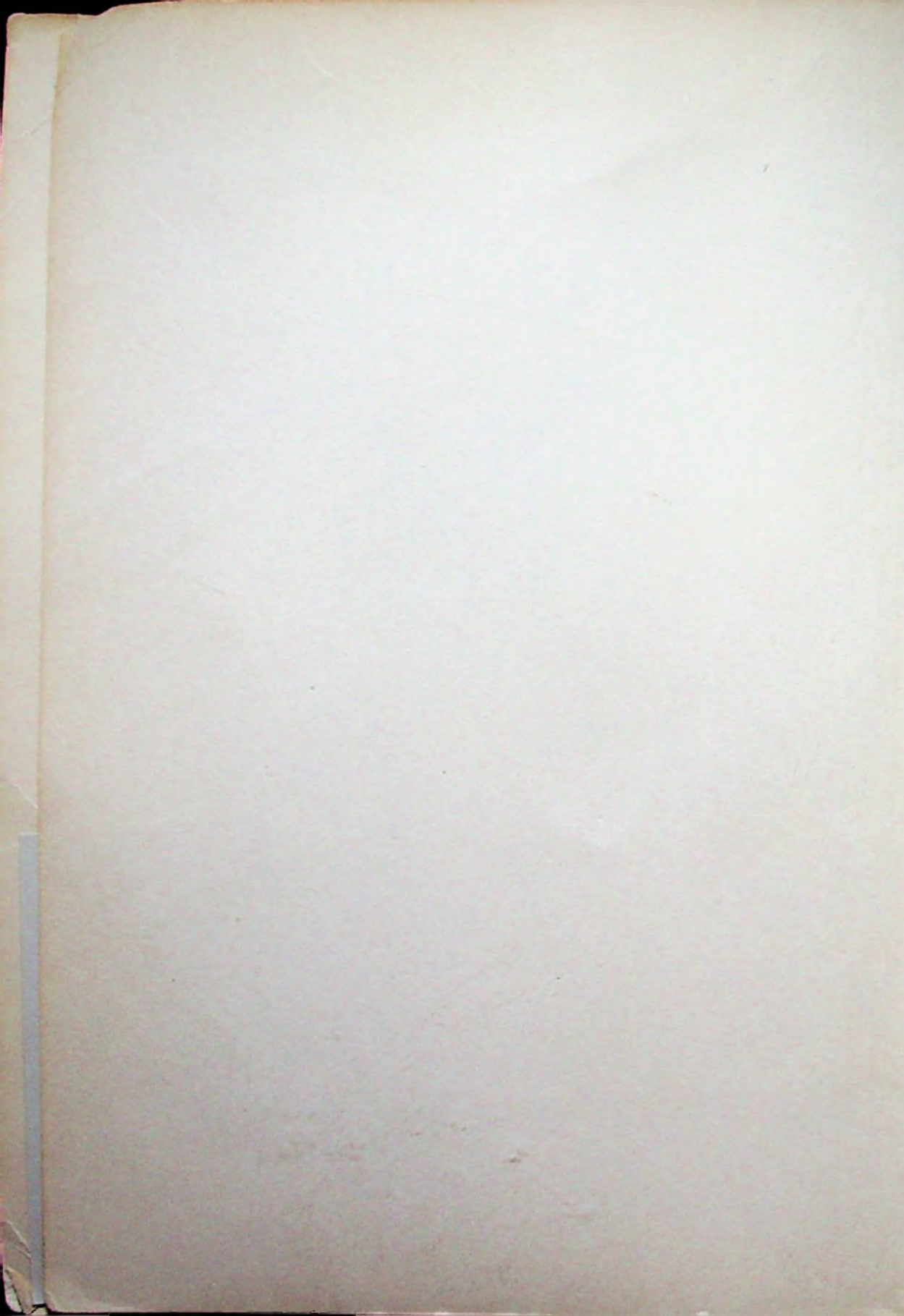
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IMIFANEKISO
IZOTWE NGU-
M. M. PEMBA



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ISAHLUKO

I

Kwathi ke kaloku ngantsomi, umfo othile ekwakusithiwa nguKholisile wafuyainja, waza wayithiya igama lokuba nguSibi. Ukholisile lo ke wayakhe kwilizwe elihle kakhulu clinamahlathi kwanamathafa. Ethubeni uSibi uzele iinjana zane. Zaqala ukuyiqaphela indalo kwakunye nezinye izinto ezirangqe indawo ezazizalelwe kuyo. Zayiqonda zisencinane nento yokuba ithi injana le ukuze iphile yanye kunina. Kwezi njana zine kwakukho engqoqo kunye nenye ebomvu nemhlophe qhwa nemnyama enamabala amhlophe empumlweni nasezindlebeni. Zakufunda ukuhamba zingekabi naxesha lide zizelwe.

Zathiywa amagama ke. Le inamabala empumlweni nasezindlebeni kwathiwa nguMthendevu, engqoqo kwathiwa nguNgqoqo. Ebomvu kwathiwa nguBambisela, yaza emhlophe yabizwa ngokuba nguTawuse. Ziye ziwaqonda amagama azo ngokumana zibizwa ngawo. Nemilenze yazo iye iswabuluka zaza zazibona zisiya kwiindawo ezithe qelcle.

Kula mahlathi ndithi ayekho kwakukho imithi enjengemi-nquma, imiqaqoba, imibhongisa neminye eyomecleleyo. Amadobo ayemaninzi kwisixeko awayezalelwe kuso uKholisile. Kwakukho ojobela namabhaku kuwo. Kanti namathafa ayenezawo iintaka eziziintutyane namacelu nemicelu njalonzalo.

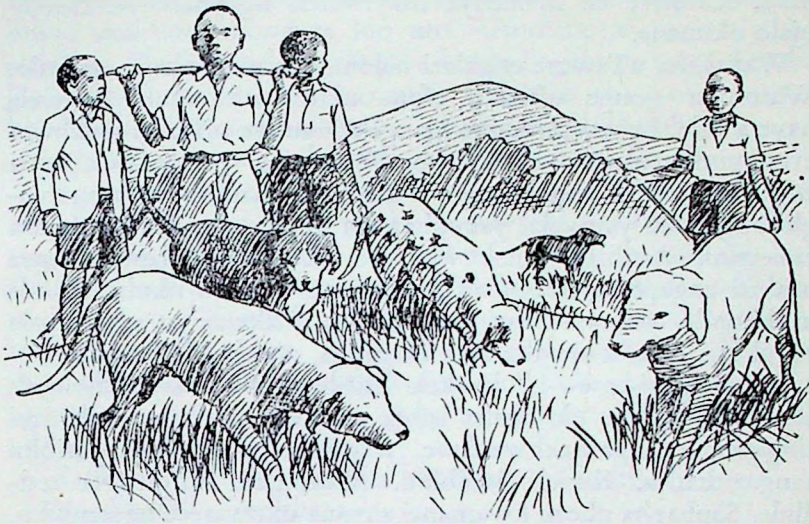
Kude kufuphi nakuloSibi apha kwakukho unlambo omkhulu owawunemifula engena kuwo. Yile milambo nala mahlathi awadala ukuba ezi zinja zonwabe. Zathi roqo ke ezincinane zaruqana zisiya endle zihamba zodwa. Zazityhuluba zakufika apho, zilinganisa unina, phofu zona zingazi nanto kutyhulutyelwa yona, kanti yena wayesenjenjalo nje wayezama ukulanda umkhondo wenyamakazi okanye intaka. Zihambe zigxampuza emanzini zibuye zidiniwe, zimanzi kananjalo.

Umzi lo wenkosi yazo wawuxhakwe yeminye. Wawumi ngakwindawo enesihlaba. Iinjana zazisiya nalapho esihlabeni. Njengokuba uKholisile wayenabamelwane bakhe nje, oTawuse nabo babenabo ababo bezinja beluncedo kubo njengoko babenjalo ababantu enkosini yabo nasentsatsleni yayo. Kubamelwane babo kwakukhoinja ekwakusithiwa nguBhaku. Babevana kakhulu nayo, baza bathi koko kuvana kwabo benza izinto ezinkulu.

Umzi ongentla kowakuloTawuse wawungowendoda cyayinguJongani, uze ongezantsi ube ngowakuloBhaku. Ilali yona yayiyeyaseNtakana. UKholisile wayenayo yonke into abanayo umninimzi. Kwintsapho yakhe amakhwenkwe ngabona bantu babezithanda izinja. Nangona zazithandwa ngabo bonke abantu bomzi, kodwa ayebalasele wona kangangokuba zazide zifune imbangi yokuthandwa kwazo kakhulu ngawo, kuba zazingancedi wona odwa. Zabuya zaqonda kamva ukuba enziwa yile ntetho ithiinja yinto yenkwenkwe. Yayingala makhwenkwe awayeziphakutya ukutya naxa ayengapheki. Loo nto ayinakothukwa kuba yonke into emzini inecala layo. Amantombazana nawo anezawo izinto azipha ukutya.

Elona xesha babezelwe ngalo oMthendevu aba kusekwindla, baza bafika ubusika sebethe dlundlu ukukhula. Baqonda kobo busika bokuqala bezelwe ukuba bulixesha elithandwayo ngabantu. Kuthe ngaminazana ithile besahleli kokwabo, beva amakhwenkwe ememeza uSibi. Ayemganyana nekhaya. Wabalaka ke waya kuwo. NoTawuse bathe ngokufuma ukuva into ayibizelwayo bamlandela. Bafikisana naye emakhwenkweni. Kubekho athi ziya phi na ezi njana, atsho abagatya ke. Ala la akokwabo esithi, "Ziyekeni, ziya kuthini na zona ukuze zifunde?" Bathi nqa ukuba yintoni na le iza kufundwa.

Amakhwenkwe elali akhwaze izinja zakomakwawo ngoku kusathethwa ngoTawuse. "Yeyantoni na le ngqokelela yezinja?" wabuza uTawuse kuSibi. Zathi gqi zonke izinja czazibizwa enge-



kamphenduli. NoBhaku waba phakathi kwazo. Kufumene kwayinja nje apha emakhwenkweni. Ngoku kufikelelwe ethubeni lokuba kuhanjwe. Umele bucala uBambisela engafuni ukuya kwindawo angayaziyo. “Tawuse, uyahamba nawe?” Imbuzile inkwenkwe yakokwabo, uBonani. Wathula uTawuse exakwe kukuba uza kuthi uyahamba uya phi na. Kwehliwa ke bhu-u kwaya kufikwa emlanjeni.

UMthendevu ubuze kuBhaku apho kuyiwa khona. “Endazi phi, ndiqala nje nam ukuze ndihambe namakhwenkwe amaninzi kangaka?” Watsho uBhaku. Akungafumani nkcazelo kuye waphinda wabuza kwinja endala egama linguXhonti. UXhonti wathi kuyiwa engqina. “Kuphi ke apho?” wafuna ukwazi uMthendevu. “Kusekuzingeleni.” Wamxelela uXhonti. Kwaba mnandi kuMthendevu kuba wavela wakuthanda ukuzingela oku, kodwa wayengazanga ahambe nabantu ngaphambili. Emile amakhwenkwe akungena emlanjeni athetha. UBonani

unyule aza kuwelela kwinxa engaphesheya komlambo. Ngelo xesha izinja ezindala zazimana zitshelaza, zimbi zingqunga. Zazide zingene nasengqonganeni yesiziba ekwakumiwe nxa nyene naso. Kuthiwe ke inxalenye mayiwelele ngaphesheya. Yenjenjalo okunene.

Waxakeka uTawuse engalazi nelona cala makabheke ngakulo. Wasoloko ejonge uBhaku efuna ukuba athi ukuba uyawela naye awele. Lakuwela lonke iqela elalinyulwe uBhaku wakhwazwa yinkwenkwe yakokwabo. Wancwina phezu kwamanzi engayazi indlela angaya ngayo kuyo. Umlambo wayengawuqhelanga. Ide yamyeka yakuphawula ukuba uyoyika ukungena emanzini. Aqalisile amakhwenkwe ukuhlisa umlambo, enza imilozi engaphele ndawo ekhuthaza izinja zawo ukuba zilande imikhondo yeenyamakazi neycentaka. Ezikwaziyo ukuzingela zaqukeza, zithi zingapha zibe zingapha, ziphinyela ezavini.

“Mvi-mvi-i-mvi-i-i,” livakele lisitsho imvila lisiya kubhijela edolweni. Lonke clo xesha izinja ezinkulu zihamba emlanjeni zingqongwe ngamakhwenkwe. Izagweba aziphethe ngazibini nangazithathu. Kuvele isicibilili. Abazingeli basigibisela sesidlule. Saphapha phezu kwamanzi simana ukuwareca ngeempiko, naso semka senjenjeya. Ndithi ke izinja zazihamba emanzini njalo, oTawuse bengavumi ukuya kuzo bentanta phezu kodonga. Babekhe babe ngathi bangangena, kodwa babe baqabele ngaphezulu.

“Uthi kwenziwa ntoni na apha njandini?” ubuzile uTawuse kuBhaku. Wanikina intloko uBhaku ejonge ezantsi emanzini. “Utheni ngathi uncwase ukuhlanje?” Waphinda watsho uTawuse. Wangena ezindongeni uBhaku waya kuba phakathi kwezinja ezinkulu. Walandela uTawuse eqhutywa likhwele, kanti izingqi uzibhudile, waya kweyela emanzini. Wabuyela elunxwemeni waqala wafunda into. Wayengazi ukuba ukudada emlanjeni kuyafana nokuqubha echibini. Ngaphambili wayeye aqubhe emachibini nasezadungeni. Umane ukungena qho ke ngoku emanzini sekungasekho nto ifuna enjenjalo.

UMthendevu noNgqoqo abazanga baye ezinjani, basoloko besecaleni labazingeli apha. Bahambe kancinane abazingeli, bada baya kufika kwesinye isiziba. Sasinemingcunube cyayiphezu kwaso. Amasebe la ayo ayejinga ade aye kutsho emanzini. UTawuse ubone into ecele ngentloko phantsi kwayo. Wayondela engade afumane ukuba yintoni na kanye. Uthe ngokuya

csondela kuyo waqonda ukuba yintaka. Wabiza uSibi wabuza ukuba yintakani na. "Lidada eliya, Tawuse," wamchazela unina. Kwangoko waya kulo. Liye lidada idada laya phakathi emanzini akungena. Wawiza emva kwalo. Lantywila. Ibe yinqaba ngoku kuye, akakwazi ukwenza loo nto. Ufumene wajikeleza apha esizibeni. Kude kwathi ngelingeni lavela lingekude kuye. Lesuka laphapha limshiya apho emanzini. Uphume eziva ukuba uya-khathazeka. Wayeselenethemba lokuba uza kulibamba.

"Kunjani, phaya phakathi?" watsho uBhaku.

"Akukho nento le," wamxelela uTawuse. Wangena naye uBhaku cfuna ukuqonda ukuba angakwazi na ukudada. Abazingeli babe baya kufika ezibukweni. Bakha bahlala phantsi apho. Le ndawo babekholisa ukulalela kuyo iintaka ezihlayo nezinyukayo. "Kuwe!" utshilo omnye wabo. Zawa ngokuwa izagweba kugityiselwa. Kanti lihobe eli lixelwayo. UTawuse yena ulive xa lidlula ngomfuthokazi omkhulu. Amakhwenkwe agibisela engajonganga aza achana uBhaku. Waphuma ezindongeni seleqhwalala ekhala.

"Kutheni, Bhaku?" wazama ukuqonda uTawuse.

"Bandibethile," wachaza.

"Ndawoni?"

"Kulo mkhono ungasekhohlo."

"Ngubani le nkwenkwe ikubethileyo?"

"Andiyazi."

Besakhedamelene apho, kuze inkwenkwe yaphulula uBhaku kulo mkhono awuqhongolisileyo. "Bafondini nibokujonga xa nigibiselayo!" Yawayala amanye le nkwenkwe. "Le njana niyibethile. Andazi nokuba ayaphukanga na."

"Akutsho ukuthi masigoduke?" wabuza uTawuse kugxa wakhe, sebebobabini.

"Bendisenomnqweno wokukhe ndihambe noko ndibone le nto yenziwayo apha ekuzingeleni," watsho uBhaku.

"Xa sibethwayo nje, uthi siya kufika sisakwazi ukuhamba kauhle emakhaya?"

"Ubuthetha ukuthi siza kusoloko sibethwa na, wena Tawuse?"

"Kulungile ke xa usenomkro singahamba."

Ngoku bathethayo kukho amakhwenkwe angahoyanga nje-ngokuba uBhaku enzakelenje. Athe csandula ukusuka apho abetha intaka yawa emanzini. Athi ke kwakuwa into emanzini, kungekho nomoya ongayidudulayo, athabathe amagade okanye amatyc

agibisele caleni linye apha ngakuyo ukwenzela ukuba iqhutywe ngamanzi ide iye kufika elunxwemeni. Ngalo mhlala akazanga abe nalo ixesha laloo nto ebangwa kukungxama. Amagade awawaphosayo aba ngawokwalathisa izinja intaka leyo ayeyi-bethile, efuna ziye kuyithabatha.

USibi waba kwezo zazingene, nangona engazanga aye kufika kuqala entakeni. UNgqoqo naye wazincama wangena emanzini, suke waraxwa. Izinja ezinkulu zibuye ejubalaza ngokukano-jubalala. Zamyeka zisithi ulinga ukudada. Amakhwenkwe akha amlinda efuna ukuba ade abe ngaphandle kwamanzi. Uthe akashukuma konke ngoku.

“Ngqoqo!” umkhwazile uBonani. Cwaka, akasabela.

“Itheni na le njana?” wabuza emangalisiwe.

“Ingathi ifile nje?” arana amanye amakhwenkwe.

“Tyhini! Ifile nyani!” Aqiniseka.

Wothuka uSibi akuva oko. Akukhutshelwa ngaphandle kwamanzi wabe sel’ esiya kuziqondela. UMthendevu noTawuse bayana ngamchlo.

“Siza kuthini ngoku?” Yabuza inkwenkwe yakuloNgqoqo.

“Siza kuhambela phambili. Asinakulibala yinja efileyo,” batsho abazingeli. Aba buhlungu la mazwi kuSibi efelwe, kwa-ngokunjalo nakoMthendevu.

Zontathu ezi zizalana noNgqoqo izinja zikhe zangqengqa ngakuye. Ezincinane zazisithi mhlawumbi uza kuvuka zingekayazi into efileyo. Bemkile abazingeli noSibi wahamba nabo. Babengabonakalisi buhlungu bona. Zafunda ngoko iinjana ukuba umntu lo akanayo nencinane imfobe ngenja. Ebengathini kakade ukuba nayo engazalani nayo nje? Babe besuka nabo oMthendevu, kodwa iingqondo zabo zibethabethana befuna ukumruqa uNgqoqo lo bagoduke naye.

Babe babona ukuba mabasukele abazingeli, babafumana. Bamthela nqa uSibi bakufika elanda ngamandla ngokungathi akukho nto ikhe yenzeka. Abazingeli baye kutsho emqhokrweni. Babona intini, bakhwaza bathi, “Intini!” Zabe nezinja seziyibona, zaya kuyo kanye xa iya emanzini. Yathi kuba isisilo esikrwempayo yazifaka kakhulu iinzipho kwezi zinja zaziyingqingile. Amakhwenkwe akazixhamlanga ngokuhla wona, aphosa nje izagweba. Uyijongisile uTawuse intini xa ilwayo. Zoyisakele izinja yakhawuleza yatsho phakathi emanzini.

“Le nja yeyaphi na?” ubuzile uMthendevu kuXhonti.

“Eyiphi?” Wabuza naye uXhonti.

“Le benisilwa nayo.”

“Hayi, asiyonja leya.”

“Yintoni?”

“Yintini.”

Waqala ke wayazi uMthendevu. Wayengevanga nokuba aye-sithini na amakhwenkwe ngokuya ayexelelana ngayo. Emva koko kubekho nkwenkwe ithi makukhe kumkiwe ngefusi kuvuswe izagwityi namangolwane. Kwawelelwa caleni linye yinto yonke ke. Bakudibana abafu abakhulu kwathiwa omnye makabambe ihlelo ngasekunene, waza omnye wanikelwa ihlelo ngasekhohlo. Kuhnjwe nje kancinane kwavuka isagwityi Kanga ngobuninzi bazo izagweba zazibethana esithubeni zingekafiki entakeni. Amakhwenkwe andwebileyo ayede akhwaze athi, “Nanko,” kodwa iintonga zingakhanga zayame nokwama esagwityini. Side saya kuphuma ehlelweni singachanwanga. Kwathi kanti abazingeli aba bayaphosa bebonke.

Izinja zitshelwe ngamandla apha efusini zisenziwa kukungaxinwa nto. Abazingeli basijongile indawo esiyokuwa kuyo isagwityi, baza baxhanela ukuya kuso. Beskude kuloo ndawo kuthe khwaphululu ingxungxu yathi jaju phaya. Zayoyika le nto iinjana azafuna nokusondela kuyo. Nayo ingxungxu nje-ngentini zaziqala ukuyibona. Uyifunzile umzingeli zayisukela ke izinja ezinkulu. Yabaleka yaya kunyuka endulini ziyithe nca ngasemva.

UTawuse noBhaku bashiywa zizo zonke izinja. UMthendevu intanga yabo yayiphala nezinja ezindala. Yena waba namendu agqithileyo esclula. Ziye zaya kuqabela endulini ke izinja zisayifutshanisele. Bavela oBhaku sebebona ngothuli phambili. Bazama ukubaleka kangangoko banakho. Babethe badlula kubo abazingeli. Loo nto yokushiywa kwabo nangabantu icacisa ukuthi babengekakwazi ukubaleka ngamandla.

“Khawume, njandini,” watsho kugxa wakhe uTawuse.

“Sishiyiwe,” watsho selechopha uBhaku.

“Kakade sisilo sini esi sisukelwayo?” wabuza uTawuse.

“Asiyonto apha ekuthiwa yinjunju?” wafanekisa uBhaku.

“Njunju, njunju, njunju!” waliphindaphinda uTawuse eli gama.

“Ewe, ndiba yiyo leya.”

“Njengokuba sebeye kutshonela nje abazingeli nezinja kwakhona siya kubafumana njani na?”

“Nathi siza kuya kweli cala kuyiwe kulo. Siza kungcambaza wena side siyokufika kubo.”

“Wakhe wayibona phofu injunju le ngaphambili?”

“Andizanga ndiyibone. Ndiyaqashela nje ukuthi yiyo leya Ndikhe ndive xa kuchazwa uhlobo emi ngalo.”

“Inyamakazi endiyaziyo mna ngunogwaja.”

Babesebethe ngcubungu bobabini ngoku kubonakala ukuba baxube nokuphumla. Babengabalekanga nakangako, kodwa bathi ngenxa yokuba baziinjana bakhawuleza badinwa. Babe beva ekhondweni. Abazingeli babesekude kubo, kwaye kusa-qhuma uthuli phambili.

“Ucinga into ethi iseyinjunju leya iqhunisa kude ngolwaa hlobo?” wabuza uTawuse.

“Akukho nokuthini, yoyi leya,” waqiniseka uBhaku, “ibe ndiya kulala apho iya kulala khona.”

Bakhefuzele ngoku iilwimi bezikhuphe ngaphandle. Babone ngabazingeli sebcisicuku behleli phantsi. Baya ke kubo.

“Izinja nazi apha zonke,” utshilo uTawuse bakuba kufutshane emakhwenkweni.

“Kazi ukuba iphi na injunju xa zilapha!” wamangaliswa uBhaku.

“Ayibalekanga yazishiya?”

“Ingenzeka naleyo into, ngangendlela le ibaleka ngayo.”

Bafika emakhwenkweni.

“Tyhini nantsi injunju, Bhaku!” wakhuya uTawuse.

“Hayi, asiyonjunju le,” watsho uSibi. “Yingxungxu.”

“Bendingayazi mna loo nto. Ndive uBhaku esitsho, ndathi ufanele ukuba unyanisile.”

“Kanti le nyamakazi ishiya izinja ayinkulu nakakhulu!” watsho uBhaku. “Ngelaa xesha ibivuka phaya ibikhangcleka ngokungathi inkulu.”

“Usayothuka ingxungxu kodwa umdala!” watsho uSibi.

“Andizanga ndiyibone kaloku, ndingazanga ndize nakwii-ndawo ezinayo.”

Kwaba mnandi kuTawuse akubona ingxungxu ifile. Wayekhe ayitsale nangendlebe edlala ngayo. Wayeba uza kufumana inyama. Nangona wayeshiyekile xa kwakusukelwa wayesithi akanakushiywa xa kutyiwayo, angatyi.

Kuhleliwe kuloo ndawo kwakubanjelwe kuyo inyamakazi kwada kwaqondakala ukuba yonke into iphumle ngokwaneleyo.

Izinja zazisezitshayinta phofu zingade zibe kude namakhwenkwe. Nawo amakhwenkwe ayekhe agibisele iintaka ezidlulayo. Ukusuka kwawo kuloo ndawo kwakuhleliwe kuyo kwakusekukho angenayo ukuhamba. Akhe ada aphikisana. Amanye ayesithi makuyiwe kutyiwa ingxungxu le yayiseyibulewe. Kukho ke nawayesanqwenela ukuba kukhe kuhanjelwe phambili. Oyasakala entethweni la ayefuna ukuba kugodukwe. UTawuse wayekweli cala lithi makuyiwe kutyiwa inyamakazi.

Ekuhambeni kwawo ingxungxu inikwe inkwenkwana eselula. Akhawuleze angena edotyeni. Ngomzuzwana ongephi engenile kulo kuvuke isakhwatsha. Sathi ukuphapha kwaso saya ngakwenye inkwenkwe, ayalibazisa yakusibona. Yasihlangabeza ngesagweba, sawa ngoko nangoko. Uthe esabaleka uTawuse ukuba esithi uyasichola wagatywa kakubi.

“Mka!” yatsho kanye inkwenkwe eyayisibethile, ingatyhilekanga ebusweni. Yayikwamlingisa ngeli xa imgxothayo. Naye ngokoyikisela umzinjana wakhe omncinane akenzanga nkani, wema. Yacholwa ngabazingeli intaka. Kwaba kukhona asondelayo uTawuse. Wafika idlavuke umbilini lo kubonakala ukuba yachanwa yinkwenkwe enamandla. Nayo yaphathiswa intwana ckwancinane. Waqonda uTawuse ukuba lukho noko uqhithso apha ekuzingeleni. Isithabathile le ntwana isakhwatsha yasifaka phakathi kwale minwe mibini ingakubhontsi, isidibanisa nentaka eyayibethwe emlanjeni. Loo nto yokunxulwa kweentaka wayeqala ukuyibona uTawuse.

Abazingeli bafune ukuba kugqitywe idobo lonke. Lalikhulu kangakanani ke! Naba bebenomoya wokugoduka babese bezimisele. UTawuse ukhe wabuza umhlobo wakhe uBhaku umahluko phakathi kwesakhwatsha nonogwaja. Kuye la magama asuke aba ngathi ayafana.

“Akusaboni na ukuba isakhwatsha yintaka, unogwaja yinyamakazi?” watsho uBhaku.

“Kutheni kaloku usuke undingxamele nje?” wadana uTawuse.

“Ndifanele. Ndiyacaphuka. Uyazazi nawe ezi zinto ukuba zahlukene mpela.”

“Noko uneengcwangu.”

“Ungandiyeki nje kaloku ndizihlalele kanti uyabona ukuba ndineengcwangu kutheni?” Baxabana apho abalingane.

Idobo eli kwakuhanjwa kulo lalenile kanobom. Kwakungenna phakathi kwathi akwabonwana,inja ayayibona enye.

Kwaba njalo nasemakhwenkweni. Uzive esoyika uTawuse kule ndawo, wafuna ukuphumela ecaleni. Wadubada into engenasi-phelo ke engade ayokuba ngaphandle. Uqonde akubona umgxobhozo ukuba uya esiya phakathi. Waxinga kuwo apho. Uzame ukuzikhupha selencwimela phezulu, enexhala lokufa. Into eyayimoyikisa kakhulu kukuthi akukhupha olunye unyawo kuphinde kutshone olunye. Uphume sekukudala esenza imigudu. Wakha wahlala ecaleni lomgxobhozo lowo, ecinga icala amakabheke ngakulo. Wayengasalazi nelona wayevele ngakulo. Wahamba ke selejonge nje ukuba angaphindi ecycle.

Iintaka zazivuka ngakuye angazinanzi nganto. Uyazi nawe ukuba nokuba ngumntu uyayiyeka nento ayithandayo xa anexhala. Ude waya kutsho esiphelweni. Wabhidwa nje kukungayazi indlela egodukayo, ngewayengazanga azixhamle ngakulandela bazingeli. Into awayenqophe kuyo kukuba uza kuba-bhaqa kuba idobo lalingagqibanga mhlaba wonke. Wacothoza ebetha ecaleni. Phofu nangoko kwakungekathi gingxi. Ixhala lalikho. Wayesithi kunokucela namaramncwa amenzakalise. Wajikela ke edotyeni engafumani mkhondo wamntu nanja. Uthe wema ithutyana emamela ilizwi lomntu onokuthi athethe. Kwathi cwaka.

“Tyhini! aba bantu batyiwe yintoni na?” Wamangaliswa.

Kuvele iintaka ezininzi angazaziyo namagama azo. Kuzo kwakukho ezimdaka ngebala nezimnyama. Zathi roqo zaphapha kunye, zithi naxa zihlala phezu kweengcongolo zihlale kunye. Wayithela nqa loo nto. Wazimisela ukuba uya kukhe ayibuze ezinjani ngelo xesha aya kuthi adibane nazo ngalo. Emka amakhwenkwe kungekho nale iyodwa ivelayo ngaphandle. Aphuma akugqiba ukulihamba lonke idobo.

“Uphi na uBhaku, Tawuse?” ambuza akumbona.

“Andimazi.” Walandula uTawuse.

“Sisimanga ke eso. Wahlukene phi naye?”

“Ndimgqibele kanye ckungeneni kwethu.”

Abazingeli bathe makuphindwe kungenwe edotyeni kukhangelwe yena. UTawuse yena wayengasakhathali nokuba akakhangelwanga. Ubuze le ntaka imnyama imsila mde, kwathiwa ngujobela.

“Ezi ntakazana zimdaka ndizibona zihamba naye ziziphi?”

“Ngamabhaku lawo,” wamxelela uSibi.

“Zenziwa yintoni ukuba ziphapha kunye zingafani?”

“Ngumhlobo mnye,” wamcacisela unina, “koko enye le yinkunzi ize enye ibe yimazi.”

“Yiyiphi eyinkunzi?”

“Ngujobela.”

Amakhwenkwe angene edotyeni ngokukhawuleza. Wasala uTawuse. Izinja zazifuna ukuba ahambe koko wala. Ilanga laliphlezu kweentloko. Kweziwa naye uBhaku selemanzi ethe toxo. Wayemdaka ludaka kungasabonakali nelona bala lakhe.

“Nimchola phi?” wabuza uTawuse.

“Simfumene emgxobhozweni,” waphendula uBonani. “Ubesel’etshone wonke kushiyeke nje intloko le yodwa. Makabulele ukuba sikhawuleze sambhaqa.”

“Mawo-o-o,” watsho uTawuse. Wayefumana emsizela nje kuba naye wayekhe weyela.

Abazingeli ngoku bathe makubhekwe chlathini. Yamangalisa into yokunyoluka kwabo uTawuse, kuba kwakusekubanjwe inyamakazi kwabethwa ncentaka.

Endleleni eya chlathini kuvuke amantshiyane nojejane. Kuloo ntlaninge yecantaka kwachanwa yanye.

“Into elungileyo noko xa kuphoswa ngolu hlobo kukuba kugoduke,” wacebisa uTawuse.

“Usungula nje nokuza kuzingela sowuyazi indlela ekuphoswa ngayo?” utshilo omnye umzingeli.

“Ndiyabona xa kuphoswayo nokuba andizanga ndizingele,” waphendula uTawuse.

Uthe akuphosa amehlo ngasemva uTawuse wabona uBhaku enyuka ngomlimandlela.

“Nanko uBhaku ezimela,” waxelela abazingeli.

“Myeke agoduke. Akusaboni na wena ukuba udiniwe?” watsho uSibi.

“Nam ndidiniwe kodwa naku ndingemki.”

“Ungahamba nawe xa uziva uthanda; akukho mntu nanja ikhe yakwalela,” wamkhulula uSibi.

“Uyazi ukuba kungona emkayo nje bendijonge ukuba masigoduke kunye sisaqala ukungena emlanjeni.”

Abazingeli bathethe ngeembila nangeentsimango nangeempunzi bakuba ngasehlathini. Kungenwe chlathini iintaka zintyiloza kakade. Abazingeli babengazikhathalelanga apha, into ababeyijongile ikakhulu izinyamakazi. Kwakukho namawa kweli hlathi, iinyamakazi zithanda ukuhlala kuwo.

2

Xa kuphakathi njalo, uTawuse ubone enye into awathi yimbuzi. Yamthi ntsho ngamehlo ingashukumi. Wakhonkotha eyoyikisa. Yamlingisa ngeempondo. Wagqiba wathi yimbuzi Idla ngokwenjenjalo nayo xa ibonainja. Iimbuzi wayeziqhelile ekhayeni lakhe. Babeye bazitye benoMthendevu zakuya ezindlwini.

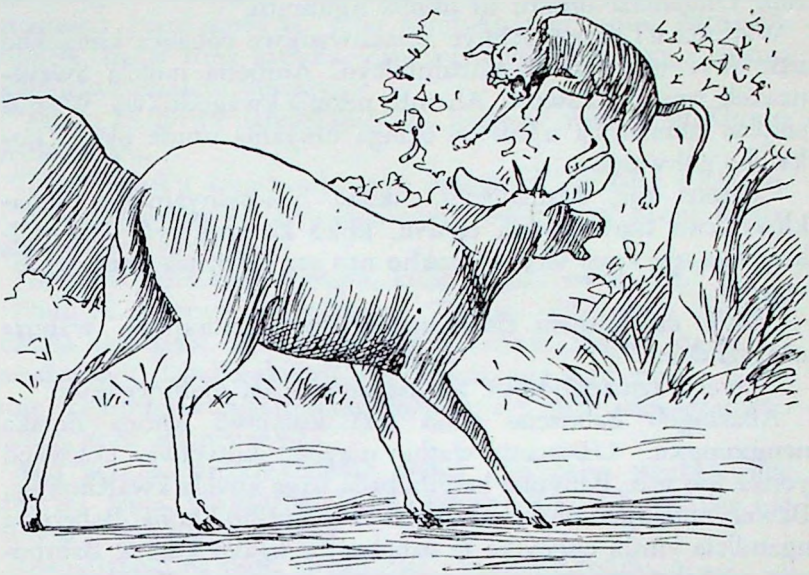
Waya eqinisile ke kule nto. Yamthi guphu ngophondo yaya kumlahla kude, watsho wathi asimbuzi le. Ime phezu kwakhe akuwa phantsi. Kodwa ayimenzanga nto. Ukuba ngaba yayimqokelc ngeyayimkhuphe amathumbu ngaphandle, inene. Iimpondo zayo zazibukhali. Waba nethamsanqa. Wavuka wabaleka kakhulu ke. Akuba esithele kwindawo awayehlalyelwe kuyo wanyeka. Wema, wazifumana esopha engqosheni. Inxeba lalingebanzi, lingenzulu kananjalo. Lalingebuhlungu.

“Hu-hu-u!” Lakhwaza ilizwi ehlathini. Wamamclisisa akuva uTawuse.

“Ngamakhwenkwe lawo,” wacinga. Wesuka wahamba. Kugqithe iinyamakazi ezininzi phambi kwakhe, waziphepha esithi zingamhlaba nazo.

“Hu-u imbila!” utshilo umzingeli kufutshane naye.

Uhlangene nenkwenkwe isukela iimbila ezo. Wakhwina efuna iqonde ukuba uhlatyiwe, ayamjonga inkwenkwe, yabaleka. Wajingxela emva kwayo, wayifumana ibambelele esinqeni



ngasemthini. Wayixelela ngokuhlalywa kwakhe. Uthe akuchaza umbala lo wesilwanyana awayedibene naso yathi yona yimbabala.

“Vi-i-ityi!” Ibethe ikhwelo inkwenkwe awayethetha nayo ibhekisa kwamanye. Asabela ngokusabela ekwiindawo ngeendawo. Amazwi asabelayo aba maninzi esenziwa nayintlokom, into apha ethi wakukhwaza nayo ilinganise, kude kuthi xa ukufuphi neliwa. Iwaxelele ke le yayime noTawuse ukuba iimbila zibheke ngakuwo.

“Tyhini! Usathetha ngeembila ngoku ndithi kuwe ndilimele?” watsho uTawuse.

“Mandithini nna?” yambuza inkwenkwe. “Uzokumangala kum apha, uyeka ukulwa nenyamakazi uziphindezele. Kunjalo nje, njanandini, ndiyakubona ukuba uya kuthi wakuba mda-

dlana kunoku ube nenkathazo egqithileyo. Ndimana ndikuva uthetha into ongayikhathalelanga emntwini. Ndiralela ukuba ndikhe ndikunikwe, kuthiwe hlala nam nokuba ziintsuku zintathu. Ungamazi umntu lo ukuba ngumntu.”

Wathula uTawuse. Abuye amakhwenkwe ephanca kungekho nale inye inyamakazi ayibambileyo. Ambona indlela awayenzakele ngayo uTawuse. Ahamba nezinja kwagodukwa. Waziva enqena ukuhamba uTawuse ecinga umgama omde ukuya kokwabo eqhwalela.

“Ubona nje, Mthendevu, ukuba bendiyinyamakazi amakhwenkwe ngendiphosa egxeni, koko ke andiyiyo. Engandihoyanga nje ayazi ukuba akukho nto aza kuyizuzisa kum apha,” watsho.

“Izinja ezi kutheni zingakuncedi nje zikufunqule?” wabuza uMthendevu.

“Ziyeke azinangqondo. Zifana nqwa nala makhwenkwe.”

Abazingeli babuzene apho ziza kutyelwa khona iintaka nengxungxu. UBonani wathi mayiye kutyelwa kokwabo yonke loo nto. Banyuke besihla bada baya kuvela kwaKholisile. Bawela entlanjeni phambi kokuba baye kutsho khona. Babebuya ngandlela yimbi engeyiyo le babchambe ngayo kusasa. Bambonile uBhaku ezisongile ngasesibayeni kokwabo. Waphakamisa nje intloko ebajonga wabuye wayiqhusheka cluthuthwini. Uphumile uBambisela wahlangabeza abazingeli besekude. Wakhawuleza wafika kwezinye izinja. Uthe akubona uTawuse noMthendevu besemva waya eleqeka kubo, waya kungena nabo ekhaya.

Kwahlaliwa ngasebuhlanti. UTawuse uvukwe ngumona wasuka wathi, “Noko, Bambisela, andiyiqondi le nto yakho.”

“Eyiphi into ke?”

“Le yokuba sixhinkxe imini yonke sibaleka wena uhleli apha, uze ufune ukutya nathi inyama.”

“Ngahle kanene akukhange ubambe nanyamakazi uthetha loo nto nje.”

“Thula ke.”

Usukumile uTawuse washenxa ngakuBambisela, wamana ukugrarama. Amakhwenkwe alungise imbiza aza kupheka ngayo, aphemba nomlilo. Izinja ezaziye engqina zazihlalele kufutshane nawo. UTawuse ube waya kungqengqa ngakuBambisela wamana egragrama emjamelale ngokungathi loo nto

wayekade eyilibe. Agxabhagxabhisile amakhwenkwe yada yabekwa eziko inyama yengxungxu.

Iintaka zosiwa. Aqasha iindawo amakhwenkwe emana ukuthi, "Ndimnqe, ndimfuba, ndimhlabulezi," njalonjalo. Iintwana ezincinane ezazo iindawo yaba ziintloko namanqina namagila kuphela. Izinja zona zathula. Zityiwe iintaka zakulunga. Izinto ezalahlelwa ezinjeni ziindlelo.

"Intaka le ityiwa namathambo na hlenje?" wabuza kuXhonti uMthendevu.

"Ewe; kaloku amathambo ayo mancinci," watsho uXhonti.

"La makhwenkwe atya amanqina odwa eva ntoni kuwo engenayo nenyama nje?"

"Inokuba ikho into ayivayo, kuba kudala awatyayo."

Ivuthwe msinya ingxungxu. Ayinto ilibazisayo kakade nokuba iphekiwe. Abazingeli batya, izinja basuke bazijulela amathambo. Kwakusekuzele nazingazange ziye endle. UTawuse wayesithi akungalifumani ithambo aye kuzo azigramamele. Zahlala zona azamenza nto.

Ade agqiba amakhwenkwe esitya kungekho nyama ikhe yanikwa zinja. Wakhathazeka uTawuse akuqonda ukuba ide yaphela engakhange ayizuze.

"Asinasabelo na thina enyameni?" Wabuza kuSibi.

"Akukho nto sikhe siyiniwe ngabazingeli ngaphandle kwala mathambo siwakhukuzayo," wamchazela uSibi.

"Kanti niyayivinjwa nje nenyama kutheni ukuba nisoloko niphuma nabo? Ezi nyamakazi bazibanjelwa nini. Abanawo amendu okuzisukela bona."

"Ewe khona, kunjalo, kodwa ke asingeze singayi xa sibizwa ngamakwenkwe, kuba aziinkosi zethu."

"Ziziphi ezona nkosi zethu, kukho abaninimzi aba basikhulisayo, kukho namakhwenkwe?"

"Yonke into engumntu yinkosi yenja. Xa izinja zingaphulaphuli nto ithethwa ngabantu azinakuphila."

"Kungokuba zingenakho na ukuzizingelela zizihlalele kweyazo imizi?"

"Sikhokelwa ngabantu xa siya kuzingela into eyiyo. Leyo into uyithethayo yokuzihlalela ayingekhe yalunga. Apha kule mizi sikhuselekile, njengoko nawe ubonayo. Asinakufumana sibe sibethwa nje xa sihleli necnkosi zethu. Kanti ngaphezulu, siyondliwa. Kweyethu imizi singasesichengeni."

“Ayisithi yini na abakhusele ezi nkosi?”

“Utsho njani ke?”

“Nditsho kuba isithi abakhonkothayo ebusuku, zilele zona. Nokuba kukho nantoni na eyonayo kufunzwa ngathi.”

“Unyanisile,” wangqina uMthendevu, ehleli ngakunina.

“Ewe, kukhonkotha thina, kanti ke sikhonkotha sithembela, sisazi ukuba bakho abantu abanokuphuma basincedise xa kukho into eyenzekayo. Singafa xa sinokuzimela.”

“Inyamakazi eziya zihlala endle zingafi nje zibangelwa yintoni?” Wabuza uMthendevu.

“Zavela zazizilo zasendle kwakudala. Ziyayazi intlalo yakhona zona.”

“Kodwa siyafana nazo ngokudalwa. Kutheni zingakhe zizokuhlala nabantu nje?”

“Kaloku ziyatywa ngabantu. Naso ke esinye isizathu esenza ukuba zingezi emizini.”

“Iigusha neenkomo zixhelwa yonke le mihla, kodwa nazi zisemizini.”

“Andisazi isizathu esinokubangela ukuba izinja zibe zinyamezele le nkqatho,” utshilo uTawuse cwajonge ngeliso elibi amakhwenkwe.

“Uthi ngesisithini wena?” wambuza naye uSibi.

“Ndithi ngesifuduka sibheke endle.”

“Nam ndikwelo lakho, Tawuse,” wema ngakuye uMthendevu.

“Size sifike sithini apho?” wabuza uSibi chleka kancinane.

“Sihlale sixelise ezaa zilwanyana ziphaya.”

Naxa uMthendevu wayengqinelana noTawuse uSibi yena akazanga abe ngakubo, ebangelwa kukwazi ke. Zakugqiba ukuthetha uTawuse ubize uBambisela. Isenzo samakhwenkwe satsho kwaphela noko kuchukelana kwabo. Wamxelela into awayethetha ngayo nonina. Uthe esafuna ukunaba wamnqanda uBambisela wathi bobuya badibane. Ukutshona kwelanga zontathu iinjana zikaKholisile zayiphicotha intlalo yenja phantsi komntu.

“Ke, besendinecobo endinalo apha kum. Mna ndithi masibheke endle siyokuma khona,” watsho uTawuse.

UBambisela: “Singemka nini ke?”

“Nangomso lo usayo besingahambayo.”

“Hayi, akunakulunga ngomso,” wala uMthendevu.

“Ucinga ukuba singaya nini wena?”

“Kunokufuneka sikhe sikhule kuqala.”

“Yo-o! Yinto endala leyo,” wakhuya uTawuse.

“Uze uqonde kakuhle ukuba asinakuba badala sihleli le ntlalo. Siya kufa ngaphambi kwexesha lethu.”

“Nditsho kuba ke asikabi namandla ngoku. Sisebancinane.”

“Ukuba bancinci kwethu akunamsebenzi, Mthendevu.”

“Ungalibali ukuba kukho amaramncwa phaya endle. Asingenze sithi sisoyiswa zizinja ezingangathi sibe nakho ukumelana nawo xa silwayo.”

Kubonakele ukuba uTawuse uyayiqonda le nto ithethwa ngu-Mthendevu. Wacinga ngokuhlalywa kwakhe yimbabala.

“Khona xa sinokuya kuhlala endle singatya ntoni?” ubuze watsho uMthendevu.

“Singatya iinyamakazi eziya zininzi phaya.”

“Yiyiphi enye into esingaphila yiyo ngaphandle kwazo?” Ubuzile kanjaqo uMthendevu, waqhuba wathi, “Ungasahlukanisi nabantu namakhaya ngento ongekeyiqondi nawe,” wamyala uMthendevu. “Phofu lihle lona icebo lakho, kodwa kuyafuneka ukuba uthi usenza into ube uqinisekile.”

“Hayi, asingenze silambe xa sinokuba sendle.”

“Ewe, ndiyakuva, kodwa usuke ungawuphenduli umbuzo wam othi sotya ntoni na ngaphandle kweenyamakazi?”

“Siya kugrenya.”

“Ntoni?”

“Umbona.”

“Siya kube siwuthatha phi?”

“Uza kulinywa. Siya kuthi xa sowulungele ukutyiwa siwube.”

“Sithini bakuba abantu bewuvunile?”

Naloo nto yokugrenya uTawuse wayithetha nje kuba engafuni kuthula. Zifumane zavumelana ekubeni zinke ckwindla ke.

“Nala makhaya sithi ngawethu nina asingowethu. Ngawce-nkosi zethu. Thina sibekelwe nje ukuba siwagcine angonakali. Inggina laloo nto nangoku silaliswa phandle, baze abantu babese-zindlwini. Iinjongo zabo zezokuba siyibone yonke into eza emakhayeni abo ngobusuku. Nala magama oBambisela zizinto nje zokuba befuna ukuba sibambe amasela,” waphetha ngaloo mazwi uTawuse. Iinjana zizimiscle ukuba ziye kulala. Unina azifunanga kumxelela into ebezithetha ngayo ngoku sezizodwa. Zaziseziyifumene apho ikhona ingqondo yakhe ngexesha ezazikhe

zatyana naye iindlebe ngalo.

Iinjana zihleli kuloo ndawo zazilala kuyo, zingathethi. Ukuthula oku kwakucacisa ukuba ziyacinga ngomcimbi lo zazikhe zadibana ngawo.

“Bambisela!” ibizile intombi kaKholisile imi phambi kwe-ndlu. Yayiphethe isitya. Iinjana zaya kuyo zibaleka. Yaya kugalela intshela yokutya elityeni elalisenkundleni.

“Niyayibona le nto besithetha ngayo?” wakhaliza uTawuse.

“Eyiphi ke?” wabuza uMthendevu.

“Le yenkqatho. Siphilwa intshela apha ukutya singakuvanga. Nasenyameni banje abantu.”

“Khawuyeke wena, kuza kube kulunge,” wamxolisa uMthendevu.

Zakukhova ukutya uTawuse uthe mazikhe ziye entombazaneni ziyibuze ukuba kuphi na okona kutya kukuko.

UMthendevu: “Kunganjani xa sinokuyibhekisa enkosini le nto yokujinjwa kwethu ukutya? Kungenzeka kuthi kanti aba bantu bazenzela nje izinto zabo abangaziyalelwanga yinkosi yethu.”

“Lilo nelo,” waqonda uTawuse.

“Masiye ngoku ke enkosini ingekade ilale,” watsho uMthendevu.

“Andiyingene mna loo nto,” wazilandula uBambisela akuba echazelwe into eza kwenziwa.

“Kungani ukuba ungayingeni?” wafuna ukwazi uTawuse.

“Hayi, ungandibuzi into le yonke ngokungathi ndisetyaleni.”

“Ngokuya ubukade ungqinelana nam bekutheni?”

“Andikhange ndikungqincele,” watsho uBambisela.

Ziqhubaqhubene ezi njana zimbini, uMthendevu noTawuse, zaya enkosini yazo. Zifike kuloo ndlu yayihleli kuyo ibase umlilo, yothile. Zona zithe zalala ngezisu ezantsi kweziko.

“Kwashushu apha,” wachaza uTawuse, phofu ephoxa. Mbangi yokuba aphoxe kukuba bona babesoloko belala phandle nokuba kuyabanda.

“Yintoni izinja endlwini?” ubuzile uKholisile.

“Kukho into esingathanda ukukhe siyive, nkosi, waphendula uTawuse.

“Yinto eluhlobo luni leyo?”

“Sifuna ukukhe sazi ukuba kutheni na singenasabelo sisiso nje apha ekhaya.”

"Isabelo esisiso sesinjani?" ubuzile uKholisile ekhwezela umlilo.

"Nditsho ukunikwa ukutya okulungileyo, nkosi."

"Okulungileyo kokunjani?"

"Kuthi kwakuxhelwa igusha, mhlawumbi inkomo, sifumane amathambo, inyama singayiphiwa. Kanti naxa kuphekwe ukutya sinikwa izikhoko."

"Oko kukuthi ke, Tawuse, nifuna oku kutyiwa ngabantu?"

"Kanye ke, nkosi," wavuma ngokukhawuleza.

"Wawuzibone phi izinja zisitya ukutya kwabantu?"

"Asizange sizibone, kodwa sinayo ingqondo ethi zifanelwe kukukufumana."

"Njengokuba unyoko ade abe ngaka nje engazange akhalazele kutya, niqonde ntoni nina nizalwa izolo oku nje?"

"Siyaphawula ukuba zizinja ezisebenza nzima. Umzi ugcinwa sithi ubusuku nemini."

"Senikwazi kona ukukhonkotha phofu?"

"Sazalwa sikhonkotha nje, ubuza ntoni, nkosi yam?"

"Heke-e! Utyaphile utsho. Oku kuthi nithi xa izinja ezinkulu zikhonkotha umntu okanye inkomo, suke nina nikhonkotha zona, nibangelwa yini, kanti nazalwa nikhonkotha nje?"

"Sukuba sintyontyela xa senjenjalo."

"Ubisi olu niluxhaphayo ananeli lulo?"

"Ubisi lufana namanzi, alunantswane."

"Indixakile ke le nto yenu, kuba uSibi yena uthule."

"Mhlawumbi wenziwa kukungaqondi intlalo le. Thina ayisikhohli konke intlalo esiyihleliyo."

"Mandenjenje kuni; andinakho ukunika izinja ukutya okutyiwa ngabantu. Andizange ndigezelwe zizinja mna njengokuba ndenzile nje. Phumani niye phandle."

"Kubanda nje, singenayo nandlu, siya kihlala phi?" wabuza uTawuse.

"O! Nifuna ukutya nokulala nabantu ezindlwini?"

"Ewe nje!"

"Ningatsho nje ukuthi anisezozinja seningabantu, kutheni?"

"Ewe khona, sizizo, kodwa imbandezelo iyavakala nakuzo."

"Inja phandle!" Uzigxothile uKholisile esonda ngazo. Zaphuma zibaleka, wazisukela waya kuma emnyango.

"Ukuba ndikhe ndanifumana ndiya kunilungisa," watsho. Wayesongela sezingasabonakali ngoku, seziduke emnyameni.

Zabonwa nguBambisela xa zibalekayo. Yena wayencathame ngasendlwini xa kwakuthethwa.

“Nazo zisiya kujikela ezantsi kwesibaya, nkosi,” waxela uBambisela.

“Yiyiphi loo nja itshoyo?” yabuza inkosi yakhe.

“NguBambisela, mhlekazi,” wazixela.

“Nawe ufuna ukutya kunye nendlu?”

“Hayi, nkosi,” walandula, ephephisa intloko.

“Ndiya kunibetha mna nihamba nifuna izinto eningazaziyo nje.”

Uyokungena endlwini uKholisile akungaziboni izinja. No-Bambisela watsho phakathi.

“Ufunani ngoku wena?” wambuza uKholisile.

“Hayi mna ndize kukuchazela ngento ebithethwa ngoTawuse.”

“Khawuqhube ndive.”

“Ezi njana zikhe zandixelela ukuba ziza kuza kuwe apha, zathi masihambe kunye, ndala. Ndithe kuzo andizange ndizibone mna izinja ezifuna ukulinganisa abantu.”

“Uthethe kakuhle, Bambisela,” wamncoma uKholisile. Uye ngakuye ngoku uBambisela eruluba ngesisu phantsi. Wamphulula ngesandla emqolo akufika kuye.

“Zithethe ntoni ke cyenye?” wamncina.

“Ndiva ngathi ziza kufuduka ekwindla.”

“Uthi kutheni na apha kum?”

“Inene kunjalo.”

“Zithi ziya phi?”

“Zijonge ukuya kuzakhela eyazo imizi endle.”

“Ukholisile undixelele.”

“Uze ungatsho kodwa kuzo ukuba uve ngam.”

“Hayi, asobe nditsho. Ziya kuthi zisimka zibe zithe tsakala, ndinyanisile.

Ube nothuku ngoku athethayo uBambisela, wakhe wabheka emnyango, wajonga macala. Wababona oTawuse behleli kule ndawo wayekuyo naye. Waba nexhala lokuthi mababe bayivile into abeyihlebeli inkosi yakhe. Wabheka phandle engakhange abe satsho kuKholisile ukuthi uyahamba.

“Tyhini nilapha!” watsho koTawuse.

“Ewe,” wavuma uMthendevu.

“Siza kuthini kubanda nje ngasebuhlanti? Sifuna iindawo ezisithileyo.”

“Hayi phofu, nifancle.”

“Khawutsho, Bambisela, wenza ntoni apha endlwini?” wabuza uMthendevu.

“Bendisithi enkosini mayivelane nathi kule mpatho siphatheke ngayo, yenze umnyinyiva.”

“Itheni ke yona wakutsho?”

“Indingxamele yafuna ukundibetha.”

“Ifune nini ukukubetha ibikuphulula nje?”

“Bendingekayithethi le nto yentlalo ngoko.”

“Hi awu-u-u!” Akakholelwa uMthendevu.

UTawuse: “Ungathini ukwala ukuza apha ngokuya besikuphuba kanti intlalo le akuyithandi? Ubuthe wena akuyingene into yokuba kuziwe kuKholisile. Ngoku uvela sewusithi ubuxoxa ngentlalo. Ubufuna ukuthetha uwedwa? Hayi, Bambisela, asinakuqhathwa nguwe.”

Uphumile uKholisile endlwini, akazenza nto izinja, nazo zahlala. Wafika ngasebuhlanti kukho umthinzi.

“Ngubani lo umi apha?” Wafuna ukwazi, akwabikho nto iphendulayo.

“Bambisela!” wabiza. Uthe xa asukumayo uBambisela wathi uTawuse makahlale phantsi.

“Ebengatshongo ukuthi asikwazi ukukhonkotha? Engayi nje kaloku kule nto ayibonayo kutheni?” watsho uTawuse. Uchole amatye uKholisile waxuluba umthinzi lowo. Kwavakala izingqi, wandula ke ukusukela. Kube mzuzu engekho wabe wabuya. Zahamba izinja zaya kuhlala emakhaleni, wamangaliswa uKholisile sisenzo sokungezi kwazo xa azibizayo.

Waba nengqondo ethi zinyhwelezwe nguTawuse njengoko yena wayesisithethi okuya beziye kukhalaza kuye. wafuna ukuba kutheni na uSibi engabangakho nje yena. Wagqiba kwinto ethi makabe udibene neenjana zakhe. Ubize intombi yakhe yasabela ikwenye indlu.

“Khawukhe intwana yomqa uwuzise apha ndiphe ezi zinja,” wayithuma.

“Kulungile, tata,” yavuma.

Ume ngeenyawo uMthendevu akuva loo nto. Wayecyona njana ibawa ngaphezu kwazo zonke.

“Uya phi, Mthendevu?” wafuna ukuqonda uTawuse.

“Ngathi siza kuphiwa ukutya nje?” waphendula watsho uMthendevu.

“Khawume,” wanqanda uTawuse, “musa ukungxama.”

Bayijongile intombazana xa isa ukutya kuloo ndlu yayinoyise. Wesuka umninimzi wakhwaza uTawuse, zaya kuye zonke ngoku iinjana. Ukusebenza akufani nokutya. Ugalele ukutya phantsi ngasemnyango, zaza zakhawuleza zakugqiba. Wazibizela phakathi egalela okunye phantsi, entla. UMthendevu wambonzeleka wabheka kuko. Wakha wamathidala uTawuse esoyika ukuingcelelwa. Akazanga ayazi indlela abaphiwa ngayo. Kwakungaqhelwanga kwenjiwa njalo ngaphambili. Uzincamile wenyukela entla naye ekugqibeleni. Zithe zakuqumbana apho uKholisile wavala ucango, kwangoko akwehla ukutya kuTawuse.

“Koko kutya benikufuna oko?” wabuza uKholisile.

“Ewe,” waphendula uMthendevu.

“Kummandi?”

“Ewe.”

“Tawuse, ngubani owathi maningabokuza ndakunibiza?”

“Akukho mntu wakha watsho, nkosi.”

“Kwathini ke ukuze ningenzi ngokuya bendinibiza?”

“Asivanga.”

“Wena uthe kwezinye izinja mazihlale xa bendinibiza,” waqashela.

“Akutshongo mna.”

“Kutsho bani?”

“Kutsho uBambisela.”

“Akathethi nyaniso uTawuse, nkosi. Nguye osinqandileyo xa ubusibiza,” wavela wazikhusela uBambisela.

“Mthendevu, asingoBambisela othe masingayi enkosini?” wangqinisisa uTawuse.

“Ewe, nguye,” watsho uMthendevu.

OMthendevu aba babesebephawule ukuba abazukudibana naye ngezimvo. Basebesithi ke mabasebelibhukuqela kuye ityala. Ithe yakuba ngunam-nawe, uKholisile wathi makaselezohlwaya zonke. Uthabathe uswazi waqala wabetha uTawuse waza wamkhuphela phandle.

“Ngathi kum ngewubetha uBambisela lo yedwa, kuba ubukhwaze yena,” watsho uMthendevu.

“Uyazi kakuhle into yokuba xa nifunwa nonke akubizwa magama enu nonke. Naxa kufunzwayo kubizwainja ibenye niye kuloo nto ifunzwayo. Akunjalo?”

“Kunjalo.”

“Ndiba nanjengokuba ulapha nje ngoku bendibize uTawuse.”

Uzibethile nezo uKholisile kodwa akazibetha njengoTawuse ngenxa yokuba umsindo wakhe wawusowuphelile. UBambisela waya kuzilalela kwindawo eyodwa enoloyiko lokuba oTawuse bangamqubula ebusuku bamtye. Kude kwasa bethu bengakhanga bamenze nto. Zontathu iinjana zikaSibi zavuka zinendyamara. Yayigqithisile kuTawuse, kuba wayenzakele. Inxeba lakhe laliseliqhanile. Zahlala kwezo ndawo zazilele kuzo zisiva imizimba. UKholisile waya kukroba impahla ebuhlanti kusasa njengesiqhelo.

“Nisalele?” wazithethisa izinja zakhe.

“Ewe, siya kuthini imizimba yethu ibuhlungu nje kuku-bethwa?” waphendula uTawuse.

“Benibethwa ngubani?”

“Nguwe. Akusayazi ngoku loo nto?”

“Nithe zinantoni na ezi zinja! Uswazi olu lungenza imizimba ebuhlungu?”

“Alubethi mthini kaloku, lubetha enyameni.”

Le ntetho yamcaphukisa uKholisile waza wangqala ezinjani selengathi akasanyatheli phantsi apha, engxamele ukuya kuzibamba ngezandla. Zaya ezantsi komzi.

“Akukho cebo limbi linokusinceda ngaphandle kweliya besikhe sathetha ngalo, Mthendevu; simke siye kuzihlalela endle,” wema kuloo nto uTawuse.

Zibe zagoduka zaya kuthi buthalala enkundleni. Ezi njana zazingaphathekanga kakubi, kodwa zathi zisandula ukuvela zaba nezikhalazo ezininzi. Yonke imihla zazihlutha, into ekuyiyo zingakholwa kukutya kwazo. Zazicacile nakumntu ongumhambi ukuba azilambi.

“Tawuse! Siza kuya kuzingela nanamhla,” utshilo uBonani kuzo.

“Siza kuya kuzingela ntoni, phi?” wambuza uTawuse.

“Iinyamakazi neentaka kwakulaa ndawo besikuyo izolo.”

“Akusoze undibone apho nemini eyodwa.”

“Ngenxa yantoni?”

“Uthi ndingabe ndizidinise ngezinto endingenakuziva?”

“Ubungayizuzanga inyama izolo?”

“Uxela amanqina namathambo?”

“Sisabelo senu eso.”

“Ningaya kuzingela nje nina, mna ngokwam andiphumeleli.”

“Ungahlala nje ngomoya wakho, andikukhathalele. Akuka-

kwazi nokuzingela kakade,” yatsho inkwenkwe. Yayiziqhula nje izinja. Abantu abaphindeli ekuzingeleni xa bebeye ngezolo nokuba iinyamakazi sezixhaphake kangakanani na. Ihambile inkwenkwe ingakhanga incokole nakangako nezinja.

“Kunganjani xa sinokucela uBhaku lo ahambe nathi?” ubuzile uTawuse kuMthendevu.

“Kungalunga,” watsho uMthendevu, “ibe angavuma lula xa sinokumvelisela bonke ubuhle bale nto siyicingayo. UBhaku yinjana endwebileyo, akanakho ukungaqondi xa acaciselwa into.”

“Kufuneka sihlangane naye kwakusasa nje. Ke ndixakiwe ukuba ndingaya njani na phaya kokwabo, kuba sikhe saxabana izolo.”

“Angaba usagcine loo nto?”

“Andinakwazi.”

“Kulungile, ndiza kuhamba nawe siye kokwabo. Siya kuthi sakuba kufuphi nomzi uzimele emakhaleni wena, ndize mna ndibheke endlwini. Ndiya kudlala naye ndimtsalele kuwe. Uze uthi xa sefefikile usuke ubaleke nawe uzame ukudlala. Loo nto iya kumenza akhululeke nokuba ebesekuqumbele.”

“Ukuba undilumile zendithini?”

“Uze umxelele ukuba akuliwa, kuyadalwa.”

“Masihle ke,” watsho uTawuse. Bakubasemakhaleni kulo-Bhaku uTawuse wazifaka kuwo. UMthendevu umfumene uBhaku engakhanga ambuze nasemntwini.

“Kanti ukho apha ekhayeni?” watsho uMthendevu.

“Ewe,” wavuma uBhaku.

“Ubusithi ndiye phi?”

“Andikhanga ndikubone okoko kusileyo. Bendisithi mhla-wumbi usahambahambile.”

“Hayi ndiselapha ekhaya.”

“Bancokola ngezinto ezazisenzeka ngezolo behleka. UMthendevu umthe chwethe-chwethe ngomkhono ugxa wakhe wataka wabhekela phaya. Wamjonga uBhaku ngokungathi uza kuthi, “Andikhanga ndikulindele ukuba uza kuphuma kuloo nto.” Oku kudlala kokusukelana kwezinja lilona cekwa lazo. Uphakamile uBhaku kubonakala ukuba uyanqena ukudlala, nto nje selezicenga. Ngoku uMthendevu wamthi nti ngomsila ezimbanjeni wabaleka. Baleqana kwalapha phakathi kwezindlu bada babheka emakhaleni.

UTawuse ubevile ukuza kwabo. Bakuba kule ndawo waye-
kuyo wavela emakhaleni esenza ngokwecebo labo noMthe-
ndevu. Kwangoko uBhaku wathana ngqakaqha naye, wase-
sukela yena ke. Umile uTawuse wajonga kuBhaku xa baphantsi
komzi. Wayelungiselela ukumphamba.

“Gra, gra,” watsho emana ukuwa ngapha nangapha. UMthe-
ndevu wayebukele encumile. Usuke kwakanye uTawuse wagqo-
tsa waphindela emakhaleni.

“Andisadinwe ngako,” wazixela akuba ngakuMthendevu.

“Nam ngokwam ndinjalo,” watsho uBhaku, zayeka ke uku-
dlala.

UMthendevu wamchazela uBhaku ngentlalo-mbi nangento
ababesebethethe ngayo. Wavuma uBhaku ukuba kufudukwe.

“Uze uncede ugaye zonke izinja ezinokunqwenela ukuhamba
nathi,” wamcela uTawuse.

“Ndiya kuzama ukuba ndidibane nazo ngomso izinja,”
watsho uBhaku. UTawuse uthe makukhe kubhekwe emlanjeni.

“Siya kwenza ntoni apho?” wabuza uBhaku.

“Senzela nje ukokula imizimba,” watsho uTawuse. “Ayi-
lunganga into yokuba sibe sihleli ndawonye.” Zasinga emlanjeni.

“Nithi xa ngaba izinja zivumile ukuhamba nathi abantu baya
kuhle balunge ukuhlala bengenazinja?” wabuza kogxa bakhe
uBhaku.

“Asazi,” watsho uMthendevu.

Ziqale kwindawo awayefele kuyo uNgqoqo, zafika amehlo la
akhe erolwe ngamagwangwa, evuthamelenc. UTawuse wa-
ngcwenga iinyembezi akubona oko.

“Khanikhangele imisebenzi yabantu ekhohlakleleyo,” watsho
selelila.

“Thula, Tawuse, thula, kuba akusenakunceda,” wamthuthu-
zela uMthendevu. Wazisula iinyembezi.

“Masikhe siye kule ndawo ibinentini,” watsho uBhaku.

“Yintoni esiza kuyenza esilwanyaneni sikrwempa noku-
krwempa?” wambuza uMthendevu.

“Siza kuqonda indlela le siphila ngayo.”

Zayibona zakufika kwindawo eyayihlala kuyo.

“Yitsho, silondini!” wabulisa uTawuse.

“Ewe-e,” yavuma intini inyekile.

“Isilo esi sesaphi na?” wabuza nangona wayesclesazi evile
ngaso.

"Sesalapha emlanjeni," yazixela.
 "Singakhe sisondele apho kuwe?"
 "Hayi," yala.
 "Sinczinto esinqwenela ukukhe sizithethe nawe, sikufutshane."
 "Andifuni zinja zisondeleyo kum, kuba ziyandikhathaza.
 Nayizolo oku zindilumile. Umzimba lo wam unamanxetyana
 azo."
 "Utya ntoni apha emlanjeni?"
 "Nditya amasele nononkala nonokrwece."
 "Ezo nto zodwa?"
 "Qha."
 "Xa usemanzini akuraxwa?"
 "Hayi."
 "Ucinga ukuthi singalunga thina xa sinokuza kuhlala apha?"
 "Nibaleka ntoni emizini yeenkosi zenu?"
 "Siphatheke kakubi gqitha."
 "Yintoni embi emizini?"
 "Asinikwa kutya kwaneleyo; kwaye nale nto yokusoloko
 kuzingelwa ngathi czinye iinyamakazi asikholwa yiyo."
 Ngaloo mazwi uTawuse wayezicengezela ejonge ukuba
 bafumane indawo yokuhlala kuyo ukuba inganayo.
 "Andazi, mhlawumbi ningalunga," yaphendula yatsho intini.
 "Khawungene emanzini sikubonc," wayicela.
 Ngokungathandabuziyo yaya emanzini icangcatha phezu
 kwamatye. Ikhe yawiza ukusuka kwayo elunxwemeni, yaza
 yathi lambalala yakuba phakathi esizibeni. Umqhokro lo yayi-
 kuwo wawusezantsi kwesiziba.
 "Izilwanyana zihlala kwiindawo ezininzi," watsho uBhaku.
 "Zikho ezisemizini, zikho ezisemahlathini nasemanzini."
 "Ingathi ziya kuphantse zidibane ndawonye kodwa kulo
 mnyaka xa ndiqondayo," watsho uTawuse. Zazithetha ke
 amehlo zimana ukuwaphosa ngaphesheya nanganeno komlambo
 zijonge ukuvela kwentini. Kuqale kwakho amaqamza, ekubona-
 kala ukuba yayibhibhidla mhlawumbi. Yavela yeza elunxwe-
 meni.
 "Uhleli ixesha elide, hi!" wakhuya uTawuse.
 "Kanti lifutshane kakhulu. Ndiyahlala ngaphantsi kwamanzi
 kude kuse xa bendintywile ukutshona kwelanga."
 "Siyayithanda intlalo oyihleliyo apha," wancoma.
 "Nikholwa yintoni kanye kuyo?"

"Sithanda ukungabikho phantsi kolawulo lomntu oku."

"Ndiyabona."

"Akungekhe thina usifundise ukuntywila?" wabuza uBhaku.

"Ndinganifundisa xa nithe nafuna."

"Siyafuna," zatsho kunye zontathu iinjana.

"Noza nini ke?"

"Besingafundayo nakaloku nje, koko sixakiwe kuba uthe akufuni nja yayamayo kuwe," watsho uTawuse.

"Ningenza nina. Noko nisebancinane; kwaye anihambi naba-zingeli."

"Abazingeli abalunganga," wabagxeka uTawuse. "Njengo-kuba silapha nje sikhe saya kudlula kwenyeinja efileyo ngokubulawiswa ngabo. Bebeyithuma kwezi ndawo bangafuniyo ukungena kuzo bona, suke yenzakala."

Zihlile izinja phezu kweendonga, zayibonela kufutshane intini. UTawuse uyibuze apho ihlala khona xa inayo, kusemini, yathi yona iba ngaphantsi kwamanzi.

"Yabonani, kungathi kanti nizokufunda indlela endizingabisa ngayo apha, ze ngomso nindiqokelelele izinja nabazingeli beze kundihlasela," yarana.

"Hayi, asinanto nokwenza nabantu konke," watsho uTawuse ekhululekile.

Intini: "Into ckufuneka niyenzile yile, niza kuwiza niye esazulwini sesiziba. Niya kuthi xa nilapho nifake iintloko zenu emanzini, nize nithi zakutshona nikhabe amanzi la ngala manqina angemva. Nje ukuba nenjenjalo, niya kuhla nakanjani na. Niwakhabe nina amanzi ningayeki, nide niye kufika ezantsi apho ndihlala khona. Enye into ema ndingayilibali nantsi, zeniyisonge imizimba yenu ukwenzela ukuba nibe namandla. Niyazi nani ukuba ithi yakuswabaluka into ebisongene iye ngamandla. Niza kube niswabaluka ke njengokuba nikhaba amanzi nje."

Zavuma izinja.

"Niyakwazi ukuwiza?"

"Ewe," waphendula uTawuse.

"Ndiza kuphinda ndingene emanzini. Nize nikhangele kakuhle apha kum."

Yenza ngendlela ebichaza ngayo yabe yabuya.

Yayithakazela kakhulu kuba yayinobuthaba nezinja, ke izama ubuhlobo nazo. Nangona yayizoyisa yayingayithandi kodwa into yokusoloko isilwa nazo.

“Hambani niye,” yaziqhuba.

Zangena zabheka phakathi. Isiziba sasisikhulu side sangathi siza kuba mnyama ngenxa yokuba nzulu. Zibe ngathi ziyantwila izinja akwatshona nomqolo lo. Zihle zaphuma czimbini kwasala uTawuse yedwa ezamazama. Naye wancama.

“Kunzima,” wachaza.

“Nini aba bangakwaziyo ukuntwila,” yazigxibha intini.

UTawuse uyicelile ukuba ikhe ingene kunye naye. Ngu-Bhaku noMthendevu abangazange babe namnqweno wakuphinda balinge. Bathc xa baphakathi oTawuse yasuka yazimka intini yehla. Yajika yakungamboni uTawuse yeza kwakuye. Imcinezela ngomkhono, watshona nje ixeshana wabe waphakanyiswa ngamanzi.

“Kunjani?” ibuzile.

“Ndiyeka, ndoyisakela,” waxela.

Wahlekwa nguMthendevu akungaphumeleli.

“Zinjandini!” watsho ekhefuzela. “Yintoni na, Tawuse?” wambuza UBhaku.

“Andikhuzi le nto yokuphoswa yindawo scsiyifumene?”

“Musa ukuzikhathaza wena, siza kuyizuza enye,” wamxolisa.
“Kusuke kwaphela ithemba kum.”

“Umhlaba ungaka, wethu, ungasowuphelelwa lithemba kuku-phoswa yindawo enye?”

“Ebebangelwa yintoni ukuba abe bomvu amanzi ngokuya bendikhe ndatshona?” wabuza entinini, uTawuse.

“Aba njalo xa ujongileyo, ungaphantsi,” yamchazela intini.

“Uyaz’ ukuba bendisithi mna kukhanyise ilanga lasemanzini?”

“Kuba bomvu njalo ke kuthi kuba asicimeli ngaphandle kokuba silele.”

UMthendevu udlale noBhaku bemana ukubambana, maxa wambi baziqikaqike engceni. Yinto cziyithandayo leyo izinja xa ziphuma emanzini zisemanzi. Intini ayizanga ikuqonde oku kudlala kwabo. Yandweba. Kuyo yayingathi benza icebo lokuyitya.

“Hayi, azizukukwenza nto izinja,” watsho uTawuse.

Yaxola yakuva. Zihleli ezindongeni izinja zomisa imizimba. Intini nayo yazibuza ngentlalo yezilwanyana ezisemizini. Zayichazela kangako ziyigxeka, kude kuthi eyezinja.

“Ndilusizi kukungakwazi kwenu ukuntywila,” yazivela, “kuba besiza kuhlala kannandi sonke apha. Phofu abantu bayasihlupha nalapha. Nezinja ngokwazo zikwanjalo.”

“Izinja azinanto zingayikhathaziyo. Konke oko kwenziwa kukufunzwa ngazo njalo,” wazihleba uMthendevu.

“Beningekho nina kwezi bezilapha izolo?”

“Besikho,” wanyanisa uBhaku.

“Ndiyakhumbula, ngathi ndikhe ndazithi tshe izinja ezincinane, into ekuyiyo bendingenaxesha lakuqwalasela nto, izinja zindifuthile.”

UTawuse: “Kaloku abantu bafuna sikwazi ukuhamba sisitya izilo thina zinja zisencinane.”

“Akuzanga ukhe uye wena emizini?” wayibuza uMthendevu.

“Ndiyokwenzani kodwa?”

“Uhambele nje.”

“Bangathi abantu besizungula ngolu hlobo sibe sifumana sizula emizini yabo? Bangasibulala.”

“Kodwa ungachwechwa ngobusuku uye. Abanakwazi nokuba uyintini.”

“Andifuni naloo nto.”

Kuyaluzele amanzi kusancokolwa njalo. Zajonga izinja

zingathethi. Kuvele umntu waya kuhlala ngaphesheya komlambo.

“Ingathi ngumntu nje lowa?” wafanisa uTawuse.

“Nguye,” yatsho intini.

“Uhlala phi?”

“Ngaphantsi kwamanzi.”

“Kukwakho nabantu na kanti apha?”

“Ewe.”

“Sinqwencela ukukhe sithethe naye nje singenza njani?”

“Hambani nje kuye.”

Azizanga ziwele izinja. Zafuna ukuthetha naye zikwelinye icala lomlambo. UTawuse umtsho ngemibuzo emininzi naye njengentini.

“Ungayi kuhlala nabantu emizini nje kutheni?” wenjenjalo ethubeni.

Abaa bantu basemizini badalelwa ukuhlala emhlabeni, saza thina saba ngabasemanzini,” wamcacisela umntu womlambo.

“Kumnandi ukuhlala apha?”

“Ewe kuba andilambi. Ndifuyile, iinkomo zomlambo.”

“Ufuyile?” waqondisisa uTawuse.

“Ewe. Ezaa nkomo zinemibala emdaka nizibonayo phaya emizini yinzala yeenkomo zomlambo leyo.”

Ezi nkomo zazixelwa zazikho kokwabo uTawuse, kodwa engayazi imvelaphi yazo.

“Izinja zona akunazo?”

“Akukho nto ingekhoyo apha.”

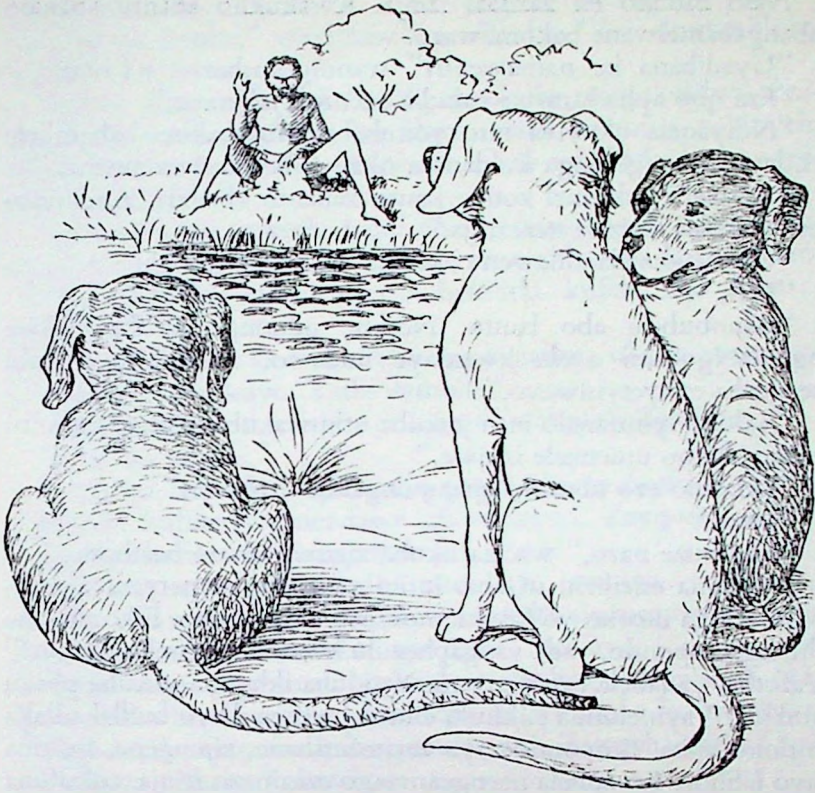
“Akunakho ukusifuya thina sibe ngabakho?”

“Andinakho kuba aningeze nalunga nani ukuba nisoloko nisemanzini.”

UTawuse waycinga ukuba intlalo ingantle xa anokuba phantsi komntu ongenowasemizini. Ibe ukuba babenokulunga emlanjeni babengazukuba sagoduka, babeza kusebeyiyeka naloo nto yasekwindla babeyijongile. Nto yona ingaqondakaliyo yeyokuba khon’ ukuba umntu womlambo wayevumile ukubafuya babeza kuthini na, kuba baboyisiwe ngamanzi. Mhlawumbi babesithi angavela necebo abenze bakwazi ukuhlala kuwo.

“Neenyoka zikhona apha?” Waphinda wabuza uTawuse.

“Ziphi apho zikhona kaloku xa zingekho apha? Amazilenzi alapha, noxam balapha. Zininzi, ndibala ntoni na?”



“Azinityi?”

“Ziyasitya. Sesisindiswa ngamacebo ethu ukuba zingasibulali.”

“Abantu balapha emlanjeni bangangabaya basemizini?”

“Hayi. Isiziba sisinye sinomntu waso. Loo nto ithethe ukuthi ke nokuba sebede badityaniswa abanakuze balingane nabantu abasemizini. Niyayibona nani imilambo ukuba ayizalanga ziziziba.”

“Inkosi le ke ngumni isiduko?”

“NdingumNgqosini mna, uGaba, isihlobo sikaCihoshe,” wazithutha.

“O, ndiyabona, mntu womlambo.”

“Yiloo nto.”

“Ukunya nabaya banathi phaya ngaphandle?”

“Ewe,” wavuma.

Naso isiduko esi zazisazi izinja. Kwakukho abantu abanaso abangabamelwane bakomawazo.

“Uyadibana ke namawenu?” wamngcambazisa uTawuse.

“Eza qho apha kum xa sukuba enento ayifunayo.”

“Ndiyaqala ukuyiva into yokuba abantu bakhe bahambele emlanjeni bengezanga kuhlamba okanye bezokukha amanzi.”

“Akukabi nakuzazi zonke izinto zabantu abadala. Andiniqon-
ndi nokuba senizazi nezezinja.”

“Uyawaxhelela amawenu akufika apha kuwe?”

“Ewe.”

“Banobubele abo bantu. Ndikhe ndijonge xa batyelelwe ngamaNgqosini avela kwezinye iindawo. Kuxhelwa iinkabi zeequsha ezityetyisiweyo.”

“Kaloku iyimfanelo into yokuba uthi wakuhanjelwa ngumntu oligazi lakho umenzele izinwe.”

“Iinkomo ezo ubusithi unazo ungakhe uzivelise?”

“Ewe.”

“Khawuze nazo,” wacela ukuba ziziswe ukuze bazibone.

Watshona csizibeni uGaba. Intini yayisahleli ematyeni ingayi-
mamelanga incoko yoTawuse nomntu womlambo. Inkomo ithe
thu ngecmpondo, yada yangaphezulu kwamanzi yonke. “Fu-u!”
Yafutha, yaqabela ezindongeni. Yagquba ikhonya yakuba phezu
kodada. Yayinelunda elikhulu elitsole, uboya bayo budlakadlaka
entloko apha. Impondo zayo zazimfutshane, zijongene. Itshoba
layo lalilide. Kwaphela ncengcamango ezazinazo izinja, zokufuna
ukuyithethisa zisoyika ukuhlatywa. Izinto ezazithanda ukuba
zingaziva ngayo zasezizibuza kumNgqosini.

“Apha emlanjeni kuhleliwe kanye ngolu hlobo kuhleliwe
ngalo ngabantu emizini,” wabhekisa kubalingane bakhe uTa-
wuse.

“Ewe, kunjalo, xa kukho abantu nezilwanyana,” wamngqi-
nela uMthendevu.

“Ndibona ukuthi mna nale ntini yinto cfana nathi zinja.”

“Nithi ayisosizukulwana sezinja ezabaleka abantu kodwa,
yaza yathi kuba izalelwe apha ayabi sawazi umlibo wayo?”
watsho uBhaku.

UTawuse: “Kunganjalo, wena.”

Zakwanela kukubuza izinja zathi mazimke kuba kwaku-
ngasekho nto zingayenzayo. Zabulisa kuNgqosini nasentinini.

“Ningabokusikhathaza ke xa nidibana nathi nizingela,” yaziya leza intini.

“Asicingi konke,” wayithembisa uBhaku. “Sel’ ungumhlobo wethu.”

“Iinkosi zenu zikhohlakale. Niyazi ukuba nangokuhlwa ziyafika apha zizokusibulala, ibe lilonxa xesha siphuma ngalo clo ukuya kuzifunela ukutya. Andiyazi le nto inkulu kangaka sayenzayo ebantwini.”

Zothuka izinja kukuthi kanti abantu bayazingela nangobusuku. Ibufe apho zisingise khona zathi zona zifunzele komakwazo.

“Aninakundisa kulaa ndawo benisithi kufeleinja kuyo?” yazicela.

Azalanga bethu, kodwa zakha zaqala zafuna ukuva eyona nto ijonge ukuyenza kuyo. Yathi ilambile.

“Uyatya na kanti nalapha ezinjani?” wabuza uTawuse.

“Ewe, xa sezifile.”

Zahamba nayo ke zaya kuNgqoqo. Yamthabatha yathi iya kumtyela kufutshane nendawo chlala kuyo. Zayijonga iinjana yada yaya kufika ezindongeni.

Izilwanyana azikhohlakale, nto nje zoniwa ngabantu,” watsho uTawuse. “Le ntini ibisilwa kakhulu nezinja izolo eli namhlanje incokola kakuhle nje nathi. Yenziwa kukuba sivele sathetha nayo asayiluma. Nayizolo ngendingahlatywanga chlathini ukuba bendingathanga ndifune ukuyibamba laa mbabala.”

Zigodukile ukusuka kwazo emlanjeni. Zagqitha ezikaKholisile zishiya uBhaku kokwabo.

“Beniphi intsasa le, Tawuse?” wazibuza uKholisile ezakhe zisahlala phantsi.

“Besisemlanjeni,” wamxelela uTawuse.

“Beniye nabani emlanjeni apho?”

“Besiye noBhaku.”

“Mamelani apha,” watsho, “ukuba nithe roqo nihamba emlanjeni nibancinci niya kugqibela ngokwenzakala. Kufe uNgqoqo izolo eli, kodwa nina nako nisiya emlanjeni nedwa.”

“Besiya kwenzakala nokuba besinabantu sixelise uNgqoqo lowa bangakhanga bamncede bekho.”

“Musa ukuthetha ndithetha.”

“Ndala le nto yokuba usuke wenze ngokungathi asinakufa xa sihamba nabantu.”

“Ngaphezulu, ndifuna ukunixelela le nto, anisoze nilunge

niye kuhlala endle nizizilo zasekhaya nje. Ulwimi! Akukho nenyeinja eyakha yazimela endle, ndingazanga ndiyive nasezimbalini. Le nto ndiyithethayo niyibona ngala wenu amehlo. Kuzele izinja kuyo yonke imizi esehlabathini. Azinanmqweno wokwahlukana nabantu. Kunjalo nje azifuni nto le yonke nje-ngani aba. Indawana esuke indixake yile yokuba anikabi nangqondo nisenza ezi zinto nje. Nditsho phofu izinja zonke zingenangqondo. Nezi zindala akukho nto yazo. Sikhe sothuke oSibi noXhonti bedlala nyenyamakazi apha phakathi kwelali, sithi sakufunza kube kungona bayiqondayo. Kanti bathi bayasebenza." Utyondyothu uKholisile kwabuhlungu kuzo ezintliziyweni.

"Asaneli yile ntlalo. Kungeso sizathu ke esithe safuna ukuya kuzakhela eyethu imizi," akamfihlela uTawuse.

"Imizi?"

"Ewe."

"Nibokuze nindiphe indawo mhla nayigqiba."

"Khawusixelele ke nkosi. Naku ukutya ninako kuninzi, nenyama niba nayo, nifuyile. Ningahleleleka na xa ninokusinika izinto esizicelayo?"

"Asinakuhlupheka nakancinane."

"Kungani ke ukuba ningasiphi?" watsho umbuzo. "Niya kukholwa kukusoloko nikhalelwa zizinja? Izinja ziqalile nje ukufuna iimfanelo zazo azinakuphinda zime zingazifumananga."

"Le ntlalo niyihleliyo yayihleliwe zezinye izinja mandulo kokhokho. Ayingeze yajikwa ziingqeqana ezinjengani nje. Abantu benganiniki nje zinto ezisetyenziswa ngabo babangwa kukuba niya kusuka nizenze bona, nizilibale into eniyiyo. Mhlawumbi ningathi ekugqibeleni makukhonkothe thina."

"Ize ibe nani ke loo nto khon' ukuba niyakhonkotha?"

"Nibe niphi nina xa sikhonkothayo?"

"Siza kube sikho, sifunza."

"Yo! Wayithetha into engatshongo khona! Kanti nifuna iza-belo nje nijonge nokuguqula indalo?"

"Nathi kaloku siyafuna ukuba sibufumane obu bumnandi nibuvayo."

"Zenithini nakubufumana?"

"Sonwabe kude kube zizizukulwana ngezizukulwana."

"Hambani nimke apha, Tawuse." Zabheka emakhaleni iinjana.

“Yinto enkulu kuKholisile, le yobukhosi babantu,” utshilo uTawuse ebhekisa kuMthendevu, “ibe uthetha nje, useza ku-khonkotha.”

USibi waya kuhlala neenjana zakhe. Wayethanda ukuba phakathi kwazo xa kungasetyenzwayo, azibalisele iimbali ke mhla acacileyo. UMthendevu umbuze ukuba kwakutheni na ukuze kuthiwe nguSibi.

“Igama lam asingoSibi, Mthendevu,” watsho unina. “NdinguBisi. Ndathiywa ngobisi olu lwenkomo. Abantu balijika ke.”

“Babelijikelani?”

“Bandinceda. Ndandisuke ndisabele xa kuthethwa ngobisi, ndicinge ukuba ndiyabizwa, ndixhamleka njalo.”

“Ngubani kanye lo mntu walijikayo?”

“Yinkosi le yethu.”

“Lalisukela entwenini elo gama lakho?”

“Ndiseyinjana ndandiluthanda ubisi. Ndandiye ndimlandele umsengi xa aya ebuhlanti. Abe ngandigxotha ndingavumi ukumka. Bendisiya naye endlwini akugqiba ukusenga, athi esitha ubisi nje emaselweni ndibe ndichophe ngakuye ndilinde olwam. Yonke imihla ndenza loo nto. Ndalifumana ngaloo ndlela ke igama lam.

“Zazingakuleqi wena iinkomo wakungena ebuhlanti, nje-
ngokuba zingayifuni njeinja xa zinamathole?”

“Ndandisima ngasesangweni.”

“Kakade zizithiyele ntoni izinja zakuba zizele?”

“Andazi. Mhlawumbi zithi ziza kubulala amankonyana azo.”

“Benziwa yini abantu le nto basoloko bezinika ubisi injana kanti bavimba kangaka?” wabuza naye uTawuse elele ngomqolo.

“Uyazi ukuba nam loo nto ndikhe ndiyifune engqondweni,” watsho uMthendevu, “ibe nala masi bawenzayo ngalo amnandi.”

“Injana azikwazi ukutya ukutya okulukhuni. Ke zinikwa into eya kuthi ihle lula emqaleni,” wacacisa uSibi.

UTawuse: “He Mthendevu, ukhetha ntoni ingqaka nentloya?”

“Ndikhetha ingqaka.”

“Nam.”

“Naniyiva phi ingqaka?” wabuza uSibi. “Kungathi kanti nitya amaselwa abantu.”

“Amakhwenkwe ayasipha umvubo akuhlutha,” wachaza uMthendevu.

“Nasemaselweni ayasithululela xa alibele ukusishiyela ubisi.” Iincoko ezo zazizenza zaziyeke ngokusuke zibone inkosi yazo.

Yangena intwasa-hlobo, nayo yadlula, kwafika ihlobo. Iintaka ezazimke ebusika zibaleka ingqele zabuya chlotyeni. Iintaka ezinjengenkongane nehlabankomo nengwanza zabanakala. Iizwe laba luhlaza butyani. Imithi emide nemifutshane yadubula. Izinja zaba nayo ngoko ingqondo yokujika kwamaxesha omnyaka. Abantu baya kulima emasimini kwakuna iimvula zehlobo. Umhlaba wonke ube nenkangeleko entsha nentle ababengazanga bayibone oMthendevu. Bona baqabuka sekutshazwa, kungasekho nto intle konke.

Babesithi bakudinwa kukuhlala ekhaya babheke ethafeni, bayokusukela iintaka ezinkulu. Ngantsasa ithile kwasa kukho igusha kaKholisile kude kifuphi nomzi wakhe. Yayingabuyanga edlelweni ngezolo. Yabhaqwa ngumntu owayehamba ngendlela ilanga seliphakamile. Wathi akukhangela uphawu ezindlebeni walwazi. Waya kubikela uKholisile ke ngomonakalo awubonileyo.

“Indawoni, mfondini, loo gusha uthetha ngayo?” wothuka uKholisile akufumana udaba.

“Ingaphaya komzi,” watsho umhambi.

Into eyabangela ukuba uKholisile angayiboni ndawonye namakhwenkwe akhe kukukhasa kwenkungu. Wakhawuleza waya kuyo engakhanga abe sathetha nto ininzi nomntu lowo wayemxelela, ngokungathi yayibulewe nguye.

“Into endingayaziyo kukuba igusha le sukuba ishiyekelani na yodwa endle ezinye zigodukile, ide izokudibana nokufa nje,” watsho akufika kuyo.

Uthe akuyiguqula wayifumanisa ityiwe emva komkhono apha, kurolwe isibindi ngaphakathi. Izinja ezincinane ezazihamba naye ziyikhuza into yokuba kanti kukho izinto ezitya impahla efuyiweyo. Zaba nethemba lokuba ziza kuyizusa igusha xa ifileyo. Ukuzala kweegusha ebusika, amatakane afileyo aye-hlinzelwa zona. Zazisithi kuza kwenziwa loo nto ke nakule. Wayiruca ngokwakhe uKholisile eyisa emzini wakhe.

“Ungatsho sikubambise nje kutheni?” wambuza uMthendevu.

“Bendikhe ndathi ndifuna ukubanjiswa?” watsho uKholisile.

“Nithi bendiwayekela ni amakhwenkwe kanti ndifuna uku-banjiswa?”

Loo gusha uKholisile wayitya nentsapho yakhe. Yaba sisiqalo ke eso. Zatyiswa kakhulu iigusha emva koko.

“Ingaba yintoni na le igqiba impahla yethu?” wakha wabuza uKholisile emakhwenkweni akhe xa ayevela endle.

“Yimpungutye, akukho nokuthini,” waphendula uBonani. “Ndibona indlela le zityiswa ngayo.”

“Liliphi icebo esingalenzayo khon’ ukuze siyibambe?”

“Hayi, asilazi,” atsho amakhwenkwe.

“Mna ndithi kungafuneka iigusha sibheke nazo ngasethafeni kwakuratyela, thina sihambe nezinja emva kweegusha apha. Yothi ke yakuza ngasemhlambini impungutye leyo, ukuba ngaba yiyo nyani le yenza le nto, siyirawule, sizame ukuyihlaba, siyifunze nangezinja.”

“Kungakuhle xa sinokwenjenjalo,” aqonda amakhwenkwe.

UKholisile wathi ke uza kuqala athethe namadoda elali, kumiswe usuku emaze igcayiselwe ngalo. Izinja zakhe zazikho ziyivisisisa yonke into ekwakuthethwa ngayo.

“Le mpungutye iluhlobo luni?” wafuna ukuqonda kunina uTawuse.

“Sisilwanyana esifana nathi zinja, koko sona sihlala emahlathini,” watsho uSibi.

“Sihlala emahlathini nje sidibana njani ncegusha?”

“Siyaphuma ngobusuku size kuzikhangelela amaxhoba apha emathafeni nangasemizini.”

“Ndingwenela ukukhe ndenze izwi, nkosi. Andazi nokuba ndivumelekile na,” watsho uTawuse.

“Ungathetha,” wamkhulula uKholisile.

“Noko ingathi kum ngeniziyeka izinja, nizibambele eli ramncwa.”

“Hayi, yinyamakazi, Tawuse,” watsho uKholisile. Wayesithi mhlawumbi woyika ukulimala.

“Nditsho nokuba yintoni na.”

“Kutheni le nto siza kuzibambela inyamakazi nikho?” wabuza uKholisile. “Ningabokwenzani?”

“Le mpungutye ayityi gusha zethu.”

“Ningabakabani nina?”

“Singabakho.”

“Ke, xa kukho into endizama ukuyilungisa efuna nina ani-

ngendinceedi?"

"Hayi."

"Ngokwenziwa yini?"

"Ngokwenziwa nguwe lowo. Akukho nto intle wakha wase-nzela yona."

"Nityebile nje nondliwa ngubani?"

"Siyaziphilela thina ngokuchola amathambo nokutya okula-hlwa ebaleni. Into oyicholayo akungetsho ukuthi uyayiphiwa."

"Inje ke le nja makwedini," watsho uKholisile. "Sekuntsuku imana indivingccla endlwini, indithethela izimanga. Ndiyavuya namhlanje xa niyivayo nani. Le nto iyinto engaqhelekanga kulungile ukuba yaziwe ngabantu. Into elungileyo ngoku kukuba sahlukane singabe siphendulana nayo."

UKholisile waya emadodeni, aza avuma ukuba ibanjwe impungutye. Ingekafiki imini eyayibekiwe yokuyibamba, izinja zikaKholisile zeva kukhwazwa ngonyezi.

"Nabo abantu beyawafunza, Mthendevu," wathetha esebutho-ngweni uTawuse. Zafumana zakhonkotha zikuloo ndawo zazi-hleli kuyo. UKholisile ubize amakhwenkwe, athi gqada phandle kwangoko.

"Aba bantu bathethayo batsho ngaphi na?" wabuza kuwo umninimzi.

"Bangentla kwesihlaba," aqashela.

"Aniqondanga nokuba ngawobani na amazwi la ngoku bebe-sekufutshane nomzi?"

"Hayi, asikhanga siwaqonde kakuhle."

"Besenivukile?"

"Ewe."

"Kwathini ukuze ningaphumi?"

"Besiba ngaba bantu badla ngokufundekela ebusuku."

"Masilandele, bafu bam, sikhangele ukuba yintoni na le isukelwayo," wawaqhuba. "Asinakuhlala nje kufunzwa ngama-doda."

USibi noBambisela baye enkosini yabo bengabizwanga. NoMthendevu noTawuse baya, benqena kodwa. Wahamba nazo zonke ke izinja zakhe uKholisile kunye namakhwenkwe. Abantu ababefunza babengasavakali. UTawuse noMthendevu bakhawuleza bajika xa basesihlabeni. UKholisile akababonanga. Baya ezindlwini kokwabo ingekabiloxesha ababeqhele ukuphiwa ukutya ngalo.

“Tyhini, Tawuse, nalapha?” Ikhuzile ibuza intombazana yakubabona.

“Singabi phi?”

“Ningabi kule ndawo kubhekwe kuyo?”

“Kuyiwe phi?”

“Niya kuthi ukuze niye endaweni nibe niyayazi?”

“Usele nje wena kutheni?”

“Akundazi ukuba ndiyintombazana? Uthi ndingahamba ndifunza endle ngobusuku?”

“Wena ufunza xa kusemini apha phakathi kwekhaya?”

“Ewe.”

Bazicelele ukutya apho entombazaneni yaza yathi ayinako.

“Khawuncede kekhona,” wayicenga uMthendevu. Yada yan-yibilika yabapha. Baphanga.

Kubekho ihlokondiba labantu elizayo xa bagqibelayo ukutya. Bathi zubelele baya kuzifaka emakhaleni. Bajonga ngantlaney phakathi kwawo befuna ukuqonda ukuba ngobani na aba bezayo. Babezimela nje babesazi ukuba baza kungxoliselwa ukujika esithubeni yinkosi yabo. Intombazana yona ngokungayiniki mikhondo oku babeyiphoxa nje. Babone ngoBhaku noBambisela bengekabaqondi kakuhle nabantu.

“Nankuya uKholisile chamba ecaleni,” watsho uMthendevu.

“Ewe,” wangqina uTawuse. Sendimqonda ngokujiwuza iingalo oku xa ahambayo.”

Bafumanise ukuba kukho into ephethwe ngamakhwenkwe. Amadoda afike ahlala ngasesibayeni. UKholisile akazanga athi vu nokuthi vu phantsi wangqala endlwini.

“Ziphi ezi zinja zimbini?” Nguye ke lowo. Intombazana: “Bezilapha phandle.”

“Bezisenzani?”

“Bezisitya,” yachaza intombazana.

“Bezisitya ukutya ebezikuthabatha phi?”

“Bezinikwe ndim.”

“Ngubani lo ebethe kuwe yipha izingafuni kusebenza ukutya?” wagqwashumla uKholisile. “Ngoku uzibonayo ukuba azinaluncedo zifuna ukulwenza kuxa wena uzingxala ngokutya kwangentseni!”

“Bendingazi mna ukuba azifanelwanga kunikwa kutya,” yatsho impendulo; “ndeva laa nto wathi masibokuzigcina zihluthi.”

“Ungaze uphinde uMthendevu noTawuse ubaphe ukutya uSibi noBambisela bengekho. Baza kubadlelelela, sendibaqonda.”

UKholisile ngoku uthume amakhwenkwe ukuba ahlinze inyamakazi, wathi amanye makacholachole iinkuni.

“Kucaca ukuba yiyona ndawo imnandi yokuphekela iinyamakazi le yasekhayapha,” waphawula uMthendevu.

“Utsho kuba kutheni?” wabuza uTawuse.

“Andiboni le nto amakhwenkwe eza neengxungxu zawo apha? Nala madoda ashiya imizi emininzi azokutyela inyamakazi kwaKholisile.”

“Enziwa kukuwuthanda lo mzi.”

“Masizincame sibheke ebantwini,” watsho uMthendevu. “Asizukwenziwa nto.”

Wayesel’ cinga ngamathambo enyamakazi eyayiza kuphekwa. Baphuma ke, bavela ebantwini.

“Nazi ezi zinja bendizifuna,” waxelela amadoda uKholisile.

Akabanga nasizinzo zakuba sesiqhwini. Uzibizele kuye. Wambungezelela uTawuse ezama ukumthothisa umsindo.

“Kungani ukuba imisebenzi yenu ibheke ecaleni, ingafani neyezinja zelali?” litshilo ilizwi lakhe lokuqala.

“Besimke nawe apha, nkosi,” waxela uMthendevu, “saza sathi ngenxeni yokoyiswa bubumnyama saphethuka.”

Wayephendula njalo nje uMthendevu wayeseleyazi into atsholo kuyo uKholisile.

“Nina ndinosizi lwenu. Ukuba aninakuthobela umntu niya konakalelwa.” Yathetha loo nto nje yodwa inkosi yabo. UTawuse ubuze inyamakazi leyo yayibanjiwe ezinjani.

“Yimpungutye,” zatsho.

“Iza kuyekwa ke leya bekusithiwa iza kuzingelwa?”

“Ukuba iigusha ziyekiwe ukutyiwa.”

“Ibibonwe ngani ebusuku?”

“Iviwe ngokukhala.”

“Tyhini! Kunyanisiwe iyafana nezinja,” waphawula uTawuse. “Iza kuthiwani?” wabuza. “Iza kunikwa thina?”

“Hayi. Iza kutyiwa ngabantu.”

“Yiyiphi kanye into engatyiwayo ngabantu?”

“Yinja nenyoka,” zamchazela izinja. “Kanti ke zikho ncentaka abangazityiyo.”

“Ziuntaka zini?”

“Ngamaxhalanga nemicelu namahem namagwangwa.”

“La makhwenkwe aye achwechwele imicelu xa iphakathi kweenkomo sukuba eza kuyithini kanti ayityiwa?”

“Enza nje kuba ingabantu abathanda ukubetha iintaka.”

Amakhwenkwe ayihlahlile inyama ayifaka embizeni. Kwathiwa makakhaphela iigusha zibheke ethafeni akugqiba. Namhla impahla yaphuma sekukho inyamazana ebuleweyo, into leyo engadli ngakwenzeka. Amadoda aseNtakana ayezincoma ukuphaphama kwawo kuba ebulele inyamakazi ehlananiphileyo. Eyona nyaniso yokubanjwa kwale mpungutye yaviwa ngoBhaku. Nayo yayikwabanjwe zizinja.

“Kuthini na abantu aba besoloko bezibeka phambili nje?” utshilo uTawuse ethetha noBhaku.

“Akungeze wayazi into yabo. Kubo into entle yenziwa ngabo bodwa,” wahleba uBhaku.

“Yophu!” ukhwazile omnye umfo kubonakala ukuba uyabawa.

“Yivani, Mthendevu,” wascebeza uTawuse.

UMthendevu: “Kungenzeka ukuba lo mntu ukhwazayo ebengekho xa bekuleqwa le nyamakazi.”

“Akakhangeleki ngokungathi ebekho konke.”

UBambisela uyivile naye le ncoko, akayithanda into yokuba kuthethwe kakubi ngeenkosi zakhe. Wesuka apha ngakoMthendevu wasondela ebantwini. UTawuse waqonda ukuba ufuna ukuya kuphalaza into abebeyithetha kubo.

“Musa ukuya ebantwini apho, Bambisela, bezihlalele,” wamqanda. Wayescbenzela ukuba angabi nandlela yakuthetha nabo.

“Ukhathazwa yintoni, wena?” wamgwexa uBambisela.

“Akukho nto yimbi, uzungula ukubaphazamisa besonwabile.”

“Ngubani obethe kuwe ndiya ebantwini?”

“Uthi andikuboni usiya ngakubo nje?”

“Wena ujonge mna apho ndiya khona, hi?”

Abantu babezimamele izinja, basebesithi uBambisela makangezi kubo. Wakha wabathiya naye abantu okomzuzwana uBambisela, phofu loo nto yabuye yaphela. Yakuvuthwa inyama inikwe le ndoda yayisithi makophulwe, kwathiwa mayibe yiyo cya-bayo.

“Namhlanje kufuneka sibize isabelo sezinja,” wacebisa uTawuse.

Nezinye izinja zobulali zihambisene naye. Iyicakacile indoda inyama yada yaba iyagqiba. Yayahlula kubini, yakho cyamadoda, yakho cyamakhwenkwe. Zivungamile izinja sesi senzo, zimbi zaphatha kukhonkotha. Zibe zasuka zathi xhonkxosholo.

“Masithethe nabantu aba, singabe sijamelene nje,” waziqhuba uTawuse.

“Kungokuba iyeyiphiinja eza kuthetha ke?” wabuza uBhaku buthembiselana.

“Nawe lowo akuchasekanga,” watsho uMthendevu.

“Mna ndithi makuthethe uTawuse,” wanyula uBhaku.

“Yena nja ibitheni?” wabuza uTawuse.

“Wena uqavile, futhi uyakwazi nokucikoza,” watsho uBhaku.

“Hayi andinakulunga,” wala uTawuse.

Ithambo lokuqala elalijulwa nguJongani laza kuwa phakathi kwazo.

“Ningalicholi,” waziyala izinja uTawuse. “Sifuna inyama leya.”

Wathi akuza kulo uBambisela wafika linyathelwe nguBhaku ngonyawo, akabi nakulithatha ke. UMthendevu yena uthe maku-thetheinja ebibambe inyamakazi. Yangxama yona seyibona ukuba inyama iza kuphela.

“Niyitya nedwa nje inyama kungokuba ibibanjwe nini na le mpungutye?” yabuza.

“Ithini na le nja?” wasabela uKholisile enyakamile.

“Uyandiva,” yatsho.

“Musa ukubhoxa apha,” wangxola uKholisile.

Yathula yakubona umsindo wakhe. Igama lenja eyayibambe inyamakazi lalinguBkelelntloko.

“Masiye phaya enyameni, sitye nathi,” utshilo uTawuse.

“Singabethwa sakwenza loo nto ke?” wabuza uBhaku.

“Nokuba sibethiwe asisayi kufa.”

Azivumanga izinja zicinga ukwenzakala. Loo nto yokuba kuthiwe aziyi kufa zingenanto yokuzihlanganisela xa zihlaselwayo zazingayithembi.

4

UTawuse wasuka waya emadodeni, wathabatha inyama watya. Zaba manqumqezi ezinye izinja, zakha zahlala zibukele.

“Yinyama yethu le, Tawuse, wenza ntoni?” wakhalisa uKholisile.

“Iphi eyethu?”

“Itheni le nja, madoda?” wacaphuka watsho uKholisile. “Ayihloli?”

Badideka abantu akwabikho nokumsusa uTawuse. Zonke izinja zaya enyameni zakubona ukuba akenziwa nto. UBambisela wazixhiphulela izidungulwana ezibini. Wacaphuka uTawuse akukubona oko.

“Yisa!” wazihlutha. Zaqubisana ke izinto ebezikade zizondana. Zabhukulana, naloo nyama yada yawa. Woyiswa uBambisela wabaleka. Yakuphela inyama, izinja zemka zingagxothwanga mntu.

“Sisini ke esi, bafondini?” wabuza uKholisile emadodeni.

“Ezi zinja xa zifuna inyama kutheni bezingayi kule yama-khwenkwe nje, le nto zisuka zize kuthi?” yatsho inkosi kaBhaku.

UJongani: “Ziqondile ukuba ontanga bazo sithi.”

Amadoda asel’ egqibela leyo ayeyiphethe, asula izandla. Kutsho ikhwelo zisathetha izinja, zabona uKholisile ezikhweba.



“Uza kusinika ntoni ngoku, nenyama seyiphelile nje?”
watsho uMthendevu.

“Masiyokuva into aza kuyithetha,” wacebisa uSibi. Zahlalela
kudana nabantu ke.

"Yizani kufuphi size kuxoxa," wazicela uKholisile.

"Thethani ngoku silapha," watsho uBekelentloko.

"Asingezze sivane xa nikude."

"Nifuna ukusibetha nisitsho nje," waxela uTawuse.

"Anizukwenziwa nto, musani ukufumane noyike."

"Ziyaqonda kanti ukuba zonile," yatsho inkosi kaBhaku.

Zide zabuya akuzincekelela. "Nijongise phi kanye?" wabuza kwayena uKholisile.

"Utsho ngantoni ke?" wazibuzisa uBekelentloko.

"Ningathini ukuthi sisitya nisuke nisiphithikeze?"

"Sifuna isabelo sethu kuni, akukho nto iyenye."

"Yiyona ndlela ningasifumana ngayo leyo yokusifuna ngenkani?"

"Ngesisithini? Kudala sithetha nani ningasihoyi."

"Ndiza kubuza wena wedwa ke, Bekelentloko. Wawukhe wasicela phi isabelo sezinja ngaphambili?" Wenkamalala uBekelentloko, kwanzima ukuphendula.

"Xela kaloku," wamngxamela uKholisile.

"Nokuba andizanga ndisibize mna ngokwam, kodwa ezinye izinja bezisoloko zisifuna."

"Ziziphi czo zinja uthi bezikade zisifuna?"

"NguBhaku lo noMthendevu noTawuse."

"Wena uyaqala namhlanje ukufuna isabelo?"

"Ewe, njengokuba ubundiva ndithetha nani apha."

"Uthwesiwe," watsho kancinane uKholisile ebhekisa emadodeni. Amadoda ambuze cyawo imibuzo nawo, waza wayiphendula kakuhle yonke nangona yayiqatha.

"Ndiza kwenjenje ngoku," utshilo umnininzi, "uTawuse noBhaku noMthendevu mabemke apha, ndingaze ndiphinde ndibabone."

Yazothusa le nto izinja, kodwa azizanga zizibonakalise. Uvelile uTawuse wathi, "Uthi masiye phi na?"

"Hambani niye kuloo ndawo nicinga ukuba ningaziphatha kuyo, nenze intando yenu apho, kungekuko kulo wam umzi ndawakha ngamandla am. Andisoze ndilawulwe zizinja ndide ndiye kulala kumhlaba obandayo."

"Kahle, mfondini, ungekade uwenze made amazwi," umnisile uJongani owaycyinkosi kaXhonti. "Ubungafanelanga kuzohlwaya na izinja zakho xa zonileyo? Esi senzo sokugxothwa kwazo ndiyaqala ukusiva okoko ndaba ngumntu."

“Osiqhelileyo sesi sokuthatyathwa kwenyama yabantu beyitya?”

“Naso andisazi, kodwa izinja ziyayiba nantoni na emzini, zisuke zibethwe.”

“Zibile ezi?”

“Hayi. Sendisenza nje umlinganiselo.”

“Zenza into entsha, ke, ndiyekeni nam ndizinike isohlwayo esitsha.”

“Qhuba ngokuqonda kwakho, mmelwane.”

“Imbi into yokuthi kanti siza kuthi sakutya sigxothwe,” watsho uXhonti.

UBekelentloko: “Uyayibona loo nto?”

USibi uzive ebuhlungu linyathelo elithatyathwe yinkosi yakhe. Wayithandaza esithi mayingazigxothi ezi njana zintathu.

“Kudala bendimele ngesabelo oTawuse aba. Wawufanele ukuba unqande bona bangandikhathazi,” watsho uKholisile.

“Nceda ubaxolele, nkosi. Ndiza kubayala ndibafundise indlela ekuhlileliwe ngayo zizinja phantsi komntu.”

“Andinakho, konke,” wabhebhetha uKholisile. “Njengokuba sebenesi simo banaso nje andikholwa ukuba bangabuye baqeqesheke.”

“Mabemke, nam nditsho,” wema ngakuKholisile noBambisela.

“Ugcotyiswe yintoni na, Bambisela?” ukhe wambuza uBekelentloko embona encumile.

“Ndivuyiswa kukuba ndiza kukhululeka,” watsho uBambisela.

“Uza kukhululeka xa ububetshelelwe phi?”

“Bendingasatyi apha ekhaya ngenxa yokuba oTawuse bebe-ndiluma sakuphiwa ukutya,” wachaza. Wacubhuka yintsini uMthendevu.

“Ndithe oBhaku mabangabikho apha,” watsho uKholisile.

“Ungandibanisi nabo mna, andingowakho,” wazahlula uBhaku.

“Nam ndithetha loo nto ithethwa nguKholisile,” yenjenjalo inkosi yakhe. Yabeka nje loo magama odwa babe sebesukuma ke oMthendevu.

“Niza kubheka phi?” wabuza uSibi.

“Siza kuya endle, akukho ndawo yimbi,” kwaphendula uTawuse.

“Ndawoni endle, iindawo zikho zininzi nje?”

“Nokuba yiyiphi na leyo iya kuthi ikholeke kuthi.”

“Nihambe kakuhle,” wababulisa, “nizilumkele ezilwanyanceni ezinengozi.”

Amakhwenkwe ayengayithandi into yokugxothwa kwezinja, kodwa athi ngokoyika amadoda akaba nakuthetha. Indawo ezaya kumisa kuyo lithambeka elalinesihlaba. Zahlala ixesha elide apho zingenzi nto. Imizi eyayiyeyakomakwazo yayisavelile kuzo. Wavakala esithi uMthendevu: “Mna ndibona ukuba kuya kulunga sizifuncle into yokutya kušekusasa nje.” UTawuse noMthendevu babengalambanga noko bona. UBhaku yena wayegqibele ngezolo ukutya.

“Ke, zinjandini, ifikile imini yokuziphatha,” waxela uBhaku. Kuphendule uMthendevu esithi, “Phi na ke, isuke yafika lisekude nje nexesha esasilibekile?”

Iintaka zazininzi esihlabeni apha, kukho iingqwangi neengqabe namaxanxadi, kodwa kungekho ndlela yakuzibamba xa zifunwa zizinja. Yayisithi yakundanda intambanani zicinge ukuba iza kuwa, isuke iphinde imke zisayijongile.

“Isihlaba esi, Mthendevu, silungile ukuba singahlala kuso?” wambuza uBhaku.

“Kum yeyona ndawo ndiyibona ukuba ilungile okwangoku sisengaka. Sikufutshane emizini. Singamana ukuya kuncathama kuyo xa inayo okanye xa soyikayo.”

Zithe xa ziya kujikela kwelinye icala zihamba zihlola indawo le zabhaqa ubhobhoyi ofileyo. Zabelana ngaye zimtya neentsiba zakhe. Oko kufumana kwazo intaka kwazinika ithemba. Phofu ukulamba kona kwakungaphelanga.

“Yintoni leya?” ubuze watsho uMthendevu.

“Eyiphi?” wabuza noBhaku.

“Nantsiya ecaleni kwamasimi.”

“Ifanel’ ukuba yinyamakazi leya,” watsho uBhaku.

“Uyibona ngani?”

“Ndiyayibona.”

Iye inyuka le nto wayethetha ngayo uMthendevu yada yeza kuma emakhaleni awayesezantsi kwesihlaba.

“Ngunogwaja lowa,” waxela uBhaku, “ke masimrawule.”

Zehla izinja zikhokelwe nguTawuse. Emakhaleni ziphumele kwicala clingaphakathi. Zabona kukho into engwevu edunduluzileyo. Zangqethangqetha zixakwe yinto czingayenzayo.

“Masiye kucela izinga emizini zisibambele lo mvundla,” wacebisa uTawuse.

“Azinakuwusa ebantwini kodwa zakuwubamba?” wabuza uBhaku.

“Unyanisile zingawusa. Masizibambele,” wajibilika uTawuse. Ziye kuwo, uBhaku noTawuse bengaphambili, inguMthendevu owuvele ngese.

“Usijongile,” wabhekisa kuMthendevu uTawuse.

Iinjana ezi zazingazi ukuba umvundla uyajonga xa uleleyo. Ukhe wangathi uyagxoboleka uBhaku efuna ukuwothusa koko awashukuma.

“Uhlalele ntoni apha?” wawubuzisa uTawuse, awatsho ukuphendula umvundla. “Usidelile kusini na?” walekelisa ngokutsho.

Ukhangele igade eza kuwugibisela, kwala xa alicholayo, uMthendevu waphakamisa umkhono wathi, “Kahle!”

“Undimisela ntoni na?” wacaphuka uTawuse.

“Masibe kufutshane kunoku, sizokuwubamba,” watsho uMthendevu. Uwucothele uMthendevu wafika wawuthi nqaku wawudlikidla.

“Yima! Ndcenzi?” watsho umvundla.

“Sibe ngathetha nawe akwavakalelwa. Kungona uthethayo ngoku,” wawungxamela uTawuse.

“Andivanga, zinkosi. Ndiyekeni.”

“Asinakho,” wawuxelela uBhaku ewuqinisele. Wakhala, isikhalo sawo savakala kalusizi ezindlebeni zezinja. Ngenxa yokungabi nazintliziyo zilukhuni zawuyeka ziwuxhakile kodwa.

“Nindilumelani ndingenzanga nto?” wazibuzela umvundla.

“Sifuna inyama,” watsho kuwo uTawuse.

“Ndinganibonisa indawo enenyama.”

“Hayi, sifuna le yakho.”

“Iphi loo ndawo inenyama?” wabuza uMthendevu.

“Iphaya esihlabeni.”

“Yinyama yantoni leyo?” wawucothozisa.

“Yeyegqwalashu.”

“Masilambe usise kuyo.”

“Kufuneka ukuze sithi wakusikhombisa indawo leyo siwubulale,” wasebeza uTawuse.

“Ndiza kuba phambi kwenu,” wazixelela umvundla.

“Hamba apha phakathi kwethu,” watsho uTawuse engasenalusini.

Izinja zazingalilibali ithamsanqa ezilifumencyo emveni koku-gxothwa kwazo kakubi emizini. Uye kuma nazo ezixhotyeni umvundla. Apho wakhwaza igqwalashu.

UMthendevu: "Ubuxelela ngenyamakazi ehleliyo na kanti?"

"Ewe," waphendula umvundla.

Ziwuyekile izinja wahamba wodwa kuba zisithi uza kuza negqwalashu. Utsho umtsi wamnye weqelele.

"Nanko, Mthendevu!" watsho uTawuse. Yeka ke.

Kwaphathana ke. Uye uba mde umgama phakathi kwazo nawo.

"Qhiwulelani ngaphambili!" wacela uncedo uBhaku kubonakala ukuba bayashiyeka. Wawubaleka ubheka ngakwicala clinemizi yaseNtakana.

"Yini na le imbi kangaka yokuya kwenyamakazi ebantwini!" wakhala uTawuse.

Amadoda namakhwenkwe awayesekwaKholisile awubone xa usezantsi komzi, aza abiza izinja zawo. Zawubamba. Wabulawa nje kwathiwa amakhwenkwe makaye nawo kwaKholisile. OBekelentloko bababonile ukuza kwabo oBhaku babalinda.

"Iphi na inyamakazi le yethu?" utshilo uTawuse ezinjeni exakanisekile.

"Ibiphi?" wambuza uBekelentloko.

"Ize ngapha, saza saqabuka sesingasayiboni xa ilapha phakathi kwenu."

"Igqithile, Tawuse. Nathi besiyirawula, yasishiya," wamlahlckisa.

UBekelentloko wayengazimiselanga kwenza njalo, kodwa wathi ngenxa yokungafuni ukuzivisa iintliziyo ezibuhlungu ezi njana wathetha ngolo hlobo.

"Umvundla uthatyathwe ngabantu," wazixelela uSibi. Zazisiya ebantwini ke.

"Masikhawuleze nathi siye phaya kokwenu, Sibi, ukwenzela ukuba sive into eza kuthethwa koTawuse," waziqhuba izinja uXhonti.

"Ndiya kuthi zinethamsanqa ukuba zikhe zawufumana," watsho uSibi.

UBekelentloko: "Kobani bona?" Uqhube wathi, "Ewe, ukuba ibingamakhwenkwe, ebenokude afumane azinike."

Bayokungena kunye noBhaku kwaKholisile oXhonti.

"Sinikeni umvundla wethu, bantundini," wawubiza uTawuse.

“Ngumvundla otheni lowo niwufuna kuthi?” wabuza uKholisile.

“Besiwusukela naza nina nawubamba.”

“Kaloku xa ubanjwe sithi ngowenu?”

“Ewe, ngowethu.”

“Njani?”

“Ubonwe sithi kuqala, sawubamba.”

“Kutheni ukuze ube kuthi kanti beniwubambile?”

“Uphuncuke emilonyeni yethu.”

“Nirhetha loo mfeketho kanti? Kutheni na singenasidima nje apha ezinjani? Le nto zisuka zifumane zithethe nokuba yintoni na eziyicingayo kuthi? Nizokusinkqangisa ngenyamakazi ebanjwe sithi ngenxa?”

“Naziphatha kakuhle zisencinane. Yiyo loo nto zinidelileyo,” yatsho inkosi kaBhaku. “Akukho nto ibubulungisa ukuba kuphelele apho.”

“Amazwana abe mbalwa nje, nkosi,” wemisa uBekelentloko. “Kanene uthini umthetho wasengqina?”

“Ndokhe ndive ke namhlanje,” watsho uJongani equbudile.

“Engqina kubethwa inyamakazi, kuze kuthi ukuba ibanjwe zizinja ithatyathwe ngabantu,” wachaza uKholisile. “Nantso into endiyaziyo mna.”

“Iye ithiweni inyamakazi le yakubanjwa ngabantu abebengakhanga bayisukele, kuze kufike abebeyileqa?”

“Iba yeyabo bantu bayibambileyo.”

“Akunjalo,” waphika uBekelentloko.

“Uthini ke umthetho wasengqina, wena nja iwaziyo?”

UKholisile wayewazi, nto nje waye engafuni kuzivelisa, ejonge ukunkwamndela unogwaja woBhaku. UBekelentloko usuke wathi, “Uthi umthetho inyamakazi yeyabo bantu bebekade beyileqa. Abantu abavela mva badla ngokudibana nayo ingasenawo amandla okubaleka. Ke, inikwa abo bayisukele kuqala.”

“Wawuyixelelwa ngubani loo nto?”

“Buza nanga amakhwenkwe. Angatsho nawo.”

“O! Weva ngamakhwenkwe?”

“Ewe.”

“Le inyamakazi ibisukelwa ngobani?”

“NgoBhaku aba.”

“Kukho inyamakazi cyakha yanikwa izinja?”

“Hayi, ayikho, kodwa loo nto ibangwa kukuba izinja izeza-

bantu. Ezi nithe anisazifuni nganto. Ngoku zilinga ukuziphilela. Kungani ke ukuba ningaziniki umvundla wazo?"

"Hlala phantsi, Bekelentloko," wamqanda uKholisile. "Aku-kwazi kuthetha."

"Bafondini! Ilizwe lonakele, xa inkqubo yezinto sinokuyaziswa zizinja," yatsho inkosi kaBhaku.

Abantu bathe bathetha bodwa bethethela phantsi bengeviwa zizinja. Kube kwaphakama uKholisile wathi, "Ngubani nainja enqwenela ukuya kuhlala noMthendevu ezindle? Ukuba ikho mayikhawuleze izixele ngoku." Akubangakho nale iyodwa evelayo. Zazisoyika ukwenza into ezazingazange ziyibone isenziwa.

"Masihambe sonke apha sikhangele ukuba abantu aba baya kukhonkothelwa yintoni na xa singekhoyo," wazicenga izinja uMthendevu. Zibethe ngoyaba ngokungathi azimvanga. noBekelentloko lo wayekhe wangathi uphambili ekuthetheni, wathula.

UTawuse: "Nizimisele nje, bantu, ukuba le nyamakazi niyithabathe?"

"Asiyoyenu le," walitsolisa uKholisile. "Hambani niye kufuna enye nina."

"Kanene nisenza le nto nje kungenxa yokuba nisoyisa?"

Bemke bequmbile oBhaku. UMthendevu ucinge into. Kwako ujikile wabiza unina noBekelentloko.

"Nantsi le nto ndifuna ukuyaleza yona kuni. Siza kuza apha xa kusebusuku. Nibokusinceda nisibekela ukutya. Asikazi nokuba siza kuphatheka luhlobo luni na."

"Siya kuzama nakanjani na xa kukho indlela," bamthembisa.

"Siza kufika kwangolu ratya lwanamhlanje."

"Ikuni loo nto," batsho.

UBekelentloko noSibi babuzwa ngabantu into ababeyibhunga noMthendevu.

"Uthi uMthendevu abasayi kuze balubeke unyawo emizini," wabaxokisa uBekelentloko.

"Eli thuba lingaka nime phaya uthetha loo nto yodwa?" yabuza inkosi kaBhaku.

"Ewe."

"Unibikela ukuba niza kwenzani ngokungezi kwabo?"

"Asazi nathi."

OBhaku bacinga kakhulu ngendlela abaphulukene ngayo nomvundla bakuba sesihlabeni.

“Ukuba besingawumamelanga lo mvundla ngesiwubulele,”
waqonda uTawuse.

“Into embi yile yokuba usuke waya kubanjwa ngabantu,”
watsho uMthendevu.

“Kunganjani xa sinokuya kule ndawo ubusithi kukho inyama-
kazi kuyo?” wabuza uBhaku.

UTawuse: “Ubuthu yinyamakazini leya isezixhotyeni?”

UMthendevu: “Ubuthu ligqwalashu,” wakhumbula.

“Yinto enjani leyo?” wabuza uTawuse.

“Mhlawumbi ikwanje ngomvundla nayo,” watsho uMthe-
ndevu.

“Andizanga ndive kwankqu gama eli.”

“Ubaleke xa ulapha kanye lo mvundla,” waphawula uBhaku
bakufika ezixhotyeni.

“Kubi ukungabi namendu,” wazililela UTawuse.

“Yitsho kakhulu!” wangqina uMthendevu.

“Kunjalonje lo ubumncinci kunale ndihlala ndiyibona,”
watsho uBhaku.

Yayiyintenetya ke leyo. Zibhaqe umqolomba ezazingaxele-
lwanga nto ngawo ngumvundla. Zingene phakathi kuwo. Kube
mnyama zingekayi apho uphele khona.

“Masikhe sikhwaze,” wasebeza uTawuse.

“Sithini?” wasebeza noMthendevu.

“Kufuneka sithi, ‘gqwalashu-u!’ ”

Zikhe zamamela ixeshana. Kwakuthe nzwanga kungekho nto
ivakalayo.

“Kuza kukhwaza uBhaku ke,” watsho uTawuse.

“Kulungile,” wavuma uBhaku.

“Yitsho!” “Gqwalashu-u!”

“Weyi,” lasabela lingathi likude kakhulu.

“Lilo clo,” waliva uMthendevu.

“Ndiza kuthetha ntoni ngoku?” wabuza uBhaku.

“Masiqale siqonde ukuba lindawoni na, lihleli nabani na,”
wacebisa uTawuse.

“Uhleli nabani apho?”

“Ndhleli ndedwa,” laxela.

“Undawoni ndingakuboni nje?”

“Ndilapha phambili emngxunyeni.”

“Wenzani?”

“Andenzinto. Bendikade ndilele.”

“Yiyo le nto lingakhange lisabele ngokuya belikhwazwa ngumvundla belilele,” waqonda uTawuse.

“Khawuze ngaphambili. Ndithanda ukuba ndidibane nawe,” watsho uBhaku.

“Ungubani wena ufuna mna?”

“Ndim.”

“Nguwe wena bani?”

“Ndingumvundla.”

“Ungubani igama lakho? Kaloku nayo imivundla inamagama.”

Wafumana washwantshwatha uBhaku esenza ngokungathi kukho gama alibizayo.

“Uthi ungubani?” latsho ngokukhawuleza igqwalashu. “Hayi andiwazi umvundla onelo gama.”

“Xa ndichetha inyaniso andingomvundla, kodwa ke kukho umvundla ondithume apha kuwe.”

“Ubusithi yiza kwenza ntoni kum?”

“Ubuthe mandizise impahla yakho.”

“Yimpahlani leyo?”

“Yinyama.”

“Uthi ubuxhele phi?”

“Andibanga sawubuza ke noko.”

“Ungumhlobo mni wena ezilwanyaneni?”

“Ndiligala.”

“Hayi, igala alithethi njengawe lowo.”

UMthendevu uthe makathi uyinja.

“Hayi makangatsho,” wala uTawuse. “Uza kulibangela ukuba lingezi. Uyazi nawe ukuba izinja zithiyiwe zizilwanyana. Yithi uyimbila.”

Uthe esaqala ukukhamuluka uBhaku ukuba eza kuthetha lathi igqwalashu, “Kutheni ingathi nibaninzi nje apho?”

“Hayi, ndindedwa,” waphendula uBhaku.

“Ngowantoni lo sebesebe ndimvayo?”

“Mhlawumbi ziindlebe zakho.”

“Akuyonja kodwa?”

“Hayi.”

“Ndiyarana ufancle ukuba yinja.”

Waphika kwaphela uBhaku ukuba uyiyoyoyiyo.

“Yishiye apho loo nyama ubuyiphathisiwe, ndobe ndizokuyilanda.”

“Bekuthiwe zendiyinike wena ezintupheni ndingayinyengezi.”

“Andinakuza apho.”

Izinja zithe mazixhwakre zikhangele ukuba alizukuphuma na.

“Ndinkile ke. Nantso inyama yakho ndiyishiya phantsi kwelitye xa ungavumi ukuza kuyithabatha,” waliqhatha uBhaku phambi kokuba bagoxe. Kubekho ukurwatshaza, bajonga kodwa ababona nto. Lithe selikufutshane nabo labalekela emngxunyeni walo.

“Masimke. Alisobe liphume siselapha,” waqonda uTawuse.

Kulo mqolomba kwakukho amakhasi awayephetsbethwe ngumoya ebusika, aza aya kungena kuwo. Ahlokoma ke ukuhamba kwezinja.

“Ngokuya ubuthe uyemka, kudala, kutheni uselapha nje?” Litshilo igqwalashu lisenkontyweni. Izinja ziye kuhlala phezu kwamatye ngaphandle komqolomba.

“Ibingange siyibambe le nyamakazi,” wanqwena uBhaku.

“Ayinakusinda,” waqiniseka uMthendevu.

“Singayithini sakuyibulala?”

“Singayitya. Akukho nto iyenye singayenzayo ngayo.”

“Abanakuza kuyithabatha oKholisile?”

“Abanakho, Bhaku. Kumhla ndingalwa ndife xa banokuza kuhlutha into kuthi.”

“Ubungalwi nje ngokuya bebethabatha umvundla?”

“Kanti ndikhe ndanomoya wokubaluma nna. Ndibayeke nje kuba besemizini yabo.”

Liqale lathi muku ngentloko igqwalashu. Liye livela lonke lada lathi tyishi emqolombeni. Amehlo alo athana mandla nawezinja. UTawuse ulibambile kodwa lamqweqwedisa laya kutshona naye emqolombeni. Waliyeke apho.

“Liphi na igqwalashu, Tawuse?” Ulibuzile uMthendevu engasebezi. NoBhaku wayclifuna.

“Linokuba liyokuzimela kulaa ndawo belikuyo,” waqashela uTawuse.

“Yiza, gqwalashu, asizukukwenza nto,” walibiza uBhaku.

“Angekhe,” lafunga.

“Ngokuba kutheni?”

“Ndinibone kakuhle nizizinja.”

“Siya kukubulalela apho ungaphumi nje,” waliqwebisela uMthendevu.

“Siyeza ke ngoku,” watsho uBhaku.

“Yizani.”

“Uya kwenzani sakuza?”

“Niya kuyibona ngoko.”

UBhaku wayefuna ukuqonda le nto yayilenze laqina.

“Singaphoswa yinyamakazi sesiyivingcele? Kunjalo nje iya-soyika,” watsho uMthendevu.

UTawuse ufumene ukuba kukho igolonxa elikhoyo apha emqolombeni, waza wabiza uBhaku.

“Alingebikho kulo mngxuma ndiwuvayo?” wabuza kuye.

“Beselithe lisenmngxumyeni,” watsho uBhaku. “Ndiza kungena ke ndiye phambili. Ndiya kulibamba ndiye nalo kuni ukuba likho.”

“Uze uthethe ukuba kukho into ongayiqondiyo.”

Umngxuma lo wawungebanzi, umokulinganainja enye. Akungena walifumana okunene.

“Ndilifumene, ndilibambile laye liyalwa,” waxela.

Wenze njengokuthetha kwakhe, walitsala weza nalo koBhaku, baza balibulala. Balikhupha emnyameni balisa ekukhanyeni. UTawuse wayebile ethe mfo, nomzimba wakhe uzele imikrwelo yeenzipho zalo. Ungade uthi xa uva eli gama lithi gqwalashu ucinge ukuba yinyamakazi enkulu, ngabulaMthendevu.

Ziphumle izinja zikhoka umoya. Zibuyezalihinza zalitya.

“Masingayigqibi le nyama, masiyigcinele ingomso,” watsho uBhaku entlantlatha umsipha.

“Ukuba besihamba nabantu apha besingasayi kube sizuze nyama,” wachaza uTawuse.

“Ingathi iza kulunga noko le nto yethu,” wvakala esitsho uBhaku.

“Nam ndinethemba,” watsho uTawuse.

Ukuthambeka kwelanga amakhwenkwe aya kunqanda impahla endle. Ababona oBhaku.

“Kanti nihleli apha na?” Ibuzile ekaKholisile.

“Ewe, kodwa siza kube sifuduke,” watsho uBhaku.

Eza kubo ndawonye nezinja awayehamba nazo. Kaloku ngabafo abasoloko belandelwa zizinja nokuba baya phi na.

“Senibulele inyamakazi ngalo mzuzwana nisuka phaya ekhaya!” Wakhuya uBonani akubona inyama eyayisele. Uthethe kakhulu apha noMthendevu. Amanye amakhwenkwe ayengasathandi kuthetha nabo ngokungathi kukho into embi ababeyenzile kuwo.

“Inyama le, Tawuse, mayiye ekhaya,” waqhula uBonani.

“Apho kutheni?” wambuza uTawuse ejalile.

“Apho kukho iimbiza zokuyipheka,” waphendula.

“Ilungile nangoku injc. Siyanazi ningayitya nedwa nje ukuba ibe phaya emizini.”

“Kodwa ukuba bendinomzi beniza kuya kuhlala kum, seyikoko ke andinawo.”

“Hayi akusenani, Bonani.”

“Ndipheni isikhumba esi ke.”

“Uza kusenzani?”

“Ndiza kwenzela utata ingxowa yecuba.”

“Bendiba uyazicelela. Akukho nto yethu aya kuze ayive lowo.”

“Hayi, ke, sisanishiya.”

Azihambanga zona izinja zawo ziralala inyama.

“Sukani apha, naziya iinkosana zenu zinishiya,” wazigxotha uTawuse.

“Aninakupha nam lo inyama bendinithethelela nje ebantwini emini?” wazibuzela uBekelentloko.

“Anisobe nifumane nyama apha nonke. Eyenu engebe niyitye nadikwa yileya niyinke abantu.”

“Kulungile, akukho nto,” watsho uBekelentloko.

UTawuse wayengazanga ayive nento eyayithethwe ngu-Mthendevu noBekelentloko ngokutya. NoMthendevu wayengasayikhathalele, ebona inyama iseninzi. Indawo czazijonge ukuya kulala kuyo izinja zasendle kusemqolombeni. Zithi kwakuba mnyama zalungiselela ukungena kuwo. Zibone into eza kuzo, zaza zabaleka, inyama yazo ziyishiya yodwa.

“Ibiyintoni leya?” kwakungona abuzayo uTawuse sebekude nezixhobo.

UBhaku: “Mna ndikrokrela ukuthi ibingumntu.”

“Abe ufunani apha ngeli xesha?”

“Uthi akevanga ukuba sinenyama waza wazimisela ukuza kuyiba?”

Zaqonda ukuba mazibheke ezixhotyeni. Zathi zakucinga ngokumka kwenyama yazo kwasekuphela naloo ndawana yokoyika zazinayo. UMthendevu waya kufika kuqala ezixhotyeni.

“Inyama inyamalele,” wavakala esitsho akungayiboni apho babeyibeke khona.

“Ungakhe ulinge uyithethe into enjalo!” wothuka uTawuse.

“Inene, ayikho.”

“Yinto eza kuthiwani na le?” watsho uTawuse.

“Emini apha sikhe sabalekela uhaya. Ngoku kulahleka inyama yethu.”

“Ndiva umkhondo,” waxela uBhaku. NoMthendevu bafumana ukuba ikho into ebikhe yahamba kule ndawo inaye. Bathi mabawulande ke baqonde ukuba ubheka phi na. Uye kweli cala lingasemizini. Babone uBekelentloko xa bangasemakhaleni kokwabo. Wagragrama bengekade babe kufutshane naye.

“Bekelentloko!” wambiza uBhaku.

“Ningakhe nilinge nize apha,” wabayala uBekelentloko.

“Kuthiwe yinkosi yam mandingabokuhlala nezinja ezigxothiweyo.”

“Kuba zinani?”

“Andazi ke.”

“Ithethwe nini loo nto?”

“Ukutshona kwelanga.”

“Wakholwa wena yiyo?”

“Hayi, kodwa ndiyathanda ukuba umyalclo ndiwenze njengoko bendiwunikiwe.”

“Kaloku size ngalaa nto bendikhe ndathetha ngayo nani emini,” wamkhumbuza uMthendevu.

“Andibanga nandlela yayo,” walandula. “Andingeze ndithi ndilamba nam ngokwam ndibe nakho ukubekela nina ukutya.”

“Bekelentloko, kungathi kanti utya igqwalashu lethu uhleli apho nje,” wakrokra uTawuse.

“Ligqwalashu ebelize kwenzani apha clo? Igqwalashu lenu belingekho kuni esihlabeni?”

Uye waya ngqo kuye uMthendevu wafumana uboya ecaleni kwakhe. “Bobantoni obu boya?” wafuna ukwazi.

“Obuphi? Obu?”

“Ewe ndixela bona.”

“Bobezaa nyamakazi bezityiwa kuloBambisela kusasa.

“Ububuthabathela ukuba uza kwenzani ngabo?”

“Asiyondawo yakho leyo.”

UBhaku ubhaqe inyama ibekwe emseleni. “Nale nyama yeyalaa mpungutye nalaa mvundla ubutyiwa kwaKholisile?” wabuza uMthendevu ephoxa.

“Tyhini! Lelaa gqwalashu lethu eli,” waqiniseka uTawuse.

“Hayi, eli ndilibamba ngoratya nje apha ngasekhaya,” watsho uBekelentloko.

“Nelethu lilahleka ngoku,” wangxola uBhaku.

“Le nto usenze yona, ayilungile,” wadana uMthendevu. UBekelentloko naye waziva ewe umzimba. Wayengalayo nale nyama kume ngaye xa wayethanda, kodwa wathi makayiyeke.

“Masithabathe inyama yethu simke nayo,” watsho uTawuse.

Bayiqokelela seyizizicwilana ekubonakala ukuba uBekelentloko wayencwase nokuyimbela enye. Wayeze nayo kokwabo nesi-khumba eyayibekwe kuso.

“Kanti sisithi sibaleka umntu nje sibaleka wena?” watsho uMthendevu sebesimka. Bathi mabangabi saya konke ezixhotyeni becinga ukuthi uBekelentloko angabe eze ngobusuku. Bahlala ecaleni kwemihlaba edibeneyo. Kwakusithile apho nangona kwakungenakufana nasemqolombeni. UMthendevu wakhwela kowona mhlaba mde wayixhoma khona inyama. Ngokwenjengalo wayeyibalekisa ezimbovaneni nasemaseleni. Ukulala kwabo basondelelana.

Kwaba mnandi kakhulu kubo kwakusa besendle, baziva bekhali-phile. Bababona abantu xa bahla benyuka elalini yabo. Ilizwe lalingathi linenkangeleko entsha kubo. Lidla ngokuba njalo kakade kwakuhla into nokuba intle na nokuba imbi. USibi wabahambela kwangaloo ntsasa yokuqala bevuka endle. Wabuza indlela abalele ngayo. “Silele kakuhle,” wancoma uMthendevu.

“Ndikhe ndanomoya wokuza kunilalisa, kodwa ndabe ndathi mandiyeke nizokuqhela ukuzihlalela nedwa,” watsho uSibi.

“Uphi uBambisela, ma?”

“Usekhaya.”

“Wenza ntoni?”

“Uhleli nje, akukho nto ayenzayo ngaphandle kokuthetha kakubi ngani.”

“Uthini?”

“Uxela izinto ebenikade nizenza.”

“Uzixela kubani?”

“Ebantwini kaloku.”

“Bathini bona abantu ngathi?”

“Bathi niza kuhamba nzima endle.”

“Abazi nto.”

USibi uzibuthise ixesha elide iinjana. Wayezinika namacebo ezinokuthi ziyivele ngawo inyamakazi. “Ndoze ndikhe ndize

apha kuni xa ndinethuba, Tawuse,” zive ngentombi kaKholisile seyisitsho ime ezantsi kwazo.

“Uya kuze uzokwenza ntoni kuthi abantu bengasithandi nje?” wayibuza uTawuse.

“Naningaxabananga nomntu wonke. Thina besingavuyayo nokuba besinokunibona yonke imihla.”

“Uya phi ke ngoku?”

“Ndisaya kutheza.”

“Uza kulungiselela ukupheka?”

“Ewe. Nize nibuye kaloku xa nilambayo apha.”

“Siya kubuyela phi sasigxothiwe nje emizini?”

“Nisenokuya kucela uxolo ekhaya. Akukho nto naniyenzile imbi ngaphandle kokufuna amalungelo enu.”

Wayiqonda le nto ithethwa yintombazana uTawuse, kodwa akatsho kuyo.

Iinjana zabheka kwaKholisile ngoratya. Zeva abantwana bedlala phandle, zakha zayama emakhaleni zingakholwa kukuba bazibone. Zaya ngasesibayeni kwakuthi cwaka. Zimbonile uSibi engasendlwini, zenza umlozi zimbiza. Wathi akuwuva waqonda, wabe selesiya kuzo. Zathetha naye. Kwathi kanti uBambisela uyazivela. Wakhawuleza waya kuxelela uKholisile ukuba zikho phakathi kwekhaya.

“Zifuna ntoni apha?” wabuza ngokungathi wothukile uKholisile. “Zazingatshongo ukuthi zifuna ukuya kuzilahlela endle?” waqokela. “Yithi ndithi kuzo ndiya kuzibetha ukuba ndikhe ndazifumana apha.”

Wathuntutha ke uBambisela wabiza uTawuse engadanga ayokufika kwindawo ababecambalele kuyo. Waxela umyalezo owenziwe yinkosi yakhe.

“Ebeye nini uBambisela endlwini?” wamangaliswa uBhaku. “Esibone njani khona ukuba silapha?”

“UBambisela akasifuni, ma,” wamangala uMthendevu. “Ndicame namhlanje. Kunjalo nje akayifihli loo nto naye.”

“Ningabokumlandela kuzo zonke izinto azenzayo,” wacebisa uSibi.

Iinjana zalala zicaphuka kukulwa nabantu kunye nezinja. Yaba ziintsukwana ezimbalwa zisesihlabeni ezasendle kwavakala

ubuxokoxoko kwilali yaseNjica cyayingaphesheya komlambo.
“Le ntsholo imana ukutsho eNjica phaya yeyantoni na?”
wabuza uMthendevu kunina.

“Kukho umgidi,” wamxelela uSibi. “Kuza konwatywa kubekho nezidlo ezininzi.”

“Asingeyi thina apho?”

“Kufanclekile ukuba siye,” watsho uSibi.

“Kukho nto ziyizuzayo kodwa izinja?”

“Ziyawafumana amajubelo. Kuthi khona xa umkhulu umgidi nenyama ilahlwe, icholwe zizinja.”

“Singwenela ukukhe siye nje singahamba nini?”

“Nangoku lithuba, kodwa khanilinde ndikhe ndibheke ekhaya.”

Akuba efikile kokwabo uSibi wathi kuBambisela mabasukele emgidini. Iinjongo zokuya kumbiza yayikukungafuni ukuba phakathi kwezinja zasendle yedwa. Zindulukile ke zonke zidibene noBhaku. Amadoda aseNtakana aqoqoma intaba efunzele eNjica nawo. OTawuse bahamba bephepha imizi ngenxa yokoyika ezinye izinja. Kanti nasethafeni babecebula kwiindawo ezithile, bebaleka amakhwenkwe awalusayo, kuba esithi akubona izinja ezingezozawo azibethe nje. Bade basondela kuloo mzi babeziya kuwo bengakhanga babe baxhatshaziwe.

Bathe bakujonga emzini babona kuqhuma.

“Inkomo inokuba seyiwile,” waqashela uSibi.

“Ubona ntoni?” wambuza uTawuse.

“Nditsho kuba naku kuqhuma ebuhlanti. Kungaba njalo ke kusukuba kulungiselelwa izoso. Kuthi nje ukuba iqangqululwe inkomo abantu babe sebebasa.”

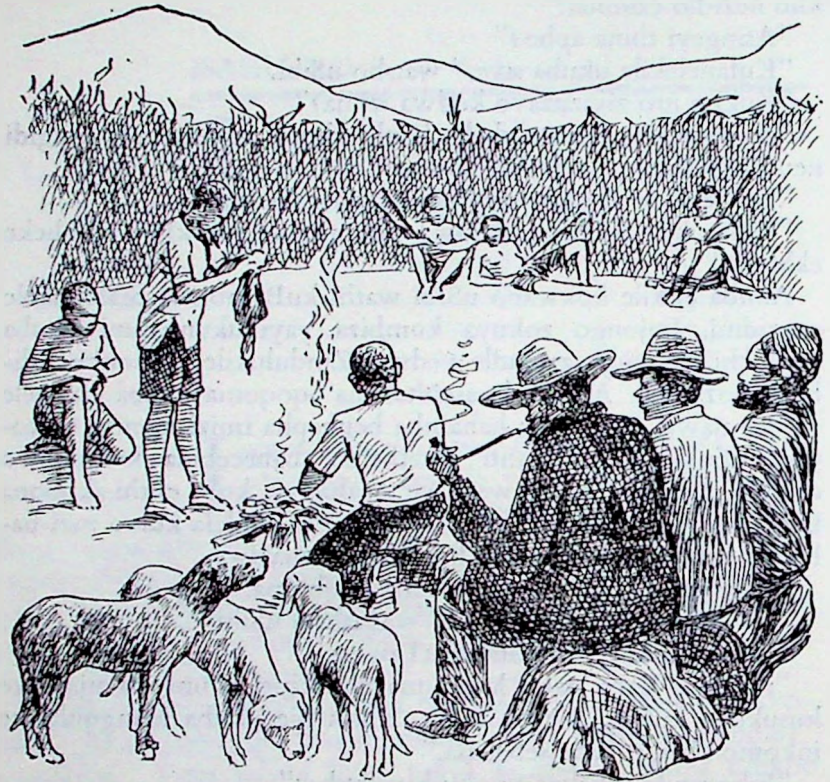
“Inkomo le ixhelwa ngoku kwegusha?”

“Hayi. Yona iqala ihlatywe emsundulweni. Kukho iinyama ekuthiwa ziintsonyama, namahleza nezifuba. Zona ziyakhu-tshwa zibe zodwa.”

Kuvakele ithungo lenyama cyosiweyo. Zaiyeka naloo nto zazithetha ngayo, zarogola zibhekisa ngasebuhlanti. Zifunc ukuya phakathi ezincinane waza uSibi wazilumkisa wathi, “Ningangeni ebuhlanti, niya kwenzakala.”

Xhungu, zema! “Siya kwenzakaliswa yintoni na ngoku?”
Wafuna ukuqonda uMthendevu.

“Niya kubethwa kakubi ngabantu. Abafuni zinja ebuhlanti xa kuxheliweyo.”



“Bathi ziza kuthini?”

“Zisuke zigwencele ematyeni zitye inyama exhonyiweyo.”

Zijikele kwelinye icala lothango zincwase ukukhe ziqonde cyona nto iqhubekayo. Zafika amadoda ethe qwelele ayame ngentla cbuhlanti ukusukela esangweni. Amakhwenkwe wona ayesezantsi emthonyameni, amanye evuthulula amaswili egquma nondonci nemizi. Eziko umlilo wawungabonakali kakuhle

kukugqunywa yimibengo. Kwakukho abafana ababemana ukuyihlaba ngezinti beyiguqula. Wavuzwa amathe uTawuse kukurala akuyibona.

Usukile omnye umfana kwaba bosayo, wasa inyama emadodeni. Atya ke. "Ina kwedini," watsho uKholisile esikela inkwenkwe eyayinjongile.

Kuvcele nja ithile ebomvu yaya kutsho ebuhlanti. Yayinokuba kule ntanga yoBhaku ngokobudala. Ixhaphhe igazi kwindawo ekwakunqunyulelwa kuyo inkomo. Ubawe ngakumbi uTawuse yakuba isenjenjalo. Kube kudala le nja isebuhlanti ingakhathelelwanga ngamadoda. UTawuse waqonda ukuba iza kude iligqibe igazi engekafiki. Waya kuyo. Wayesel' eyilibele nento eyayithethwe nguSibi. Ungene nje esangweni kwabe sekusukuma indoda yaseNjica, yathabatha uswazi olwaluphantsi. Itsho kwakabini kuTawuse emqolo ngalo, akabi nakuzibamba, wakhala. Uthe xa athi uyaphuma, waphhekuzwa yindoda eyayiseyimi esangweni. Kwaba nzima ukutyhudisa aye kugqitha kuyo. Wabaleka egqiba ubuhlanti obu bonke exakhekile, chewulwa nangamakhlwenkwe.

"Ibithe ukuze ibe sebuhlanti nje kwathini?" utshilo umfana owayeseziko ephuthaphutha into angamgibisela ngayo. UKholisile umchane ngentonga kwavakala isithonga.

"Hayi, mfondini, musa ukubethainja ngolu hlobo," anqanda amadoda.

"Kutsho kwathi ngco kum entliziyweni," wazixela uKholisile.

UBambisela wahleka walala. Ivule umtyhi le yayisesangweni indoda, kodwa yakha yazithi tshiphu-tshiphu ngoswazi nayo izinja. Ukhe wahlala yedwa uTawuse akuba phandle, wazibhija. Wacinga ngento yokubethwa kwakhe efika emzini. Zeza kumngqonga izinja azalana nazo.

"Ngala majubelo ubusithi siza kuwazuzwa apha ke la? wabuza kunina.

"Bendikuxelele kwasentlandlolo ukuba musa ukuya ebuhlanti," watsho uSibi kuye. "Baya kukubetha bona abantu bengagezi nje."

UTawuse ubizeinja awayebethwa nayo wayibuza ukuba iyeyaphi na. "Ndingowalapha cNjica," yazichaza.

"Uyayiqonda ukuba mbi kwale nto siyenziwe ngabantu?" watsho uTawuse.

"Yo! Abantu basithiye ngokungathi asibasebenzeli. Ela

gazi basisusa kulo phaya akukho nto baza kuyenza ngalo.”

“Uze ukhangele ukuba uya kuphela na lo mgidi ndingalumanga mntu.”

“Uze uqhube ndiya kukuncedisa.”

“Ungubani igama lakho?”

“NdinguZonele.”

Abantu bakhawuleza bachithakala baya emakhayeni abo. Usuku olu lwalulolokuxhela kungekabikho zinto zingako zityiwayo. Ngongcwalazi kwagaleleka uBekelentloko kunye nezinja zaseNtakana. OSibi baba novuyo bakumbona. Kwaphithizela izinja zodwa kuloo mzi. UBekelentloko lo wayelixhwanngusha cloyikekayo kwezinye izinja. Wayekwanjalo nasebantwini phofu. Babeye bakhwaze xa baya kokwabo bathi maku-nqandweinja, besitsho ke bengamboni.

Ibala lakhe lalimnyama khaca enechaphaza elimhlophe apha engqosheni. Ilizwi lakhe lalikhulu, lisaziwa ngabantu nazinginja kwilali yakhe. Wayenamabamba amade awayede angathi aza kuphumela ngaphandle emlonyeni. Izinyo wayelisebenzisa kwakucaca ukuba ezinye izinja zingxamele ukumdela. Inkosi yakhe yayinebhongo ngaye. Yinja awayekhulele phantsi kwayo le uBhaku. Yayimphangela kwakudityaniswa ukutya kwabo. Uzamile uBekelentloko ukuba akhe afumane ukutya. Akudinwa kukuzula waya kuhlala nezinja zaseNtakana.

“Wafika sekuhlwile ubukade uphi?” wabuza uMthendevu

“Hayi, bendingawazi lo mgidi,” waxela uBekelentloko.

“Utheth’ ukuba uwuwe nini?”

“Ndiwuva ukutshona kwelanga nje, kwathiwa nani nilapha.”

“Kungani ukuba uma angakwazisi nihleli kunye nje elalini?”

“Yile nto indixakileyo nam.”

“Ndalibala, Mthendevu,” watsho uSibi.

“Bekuqhubeka ntoni apha emini?” wabuza naye uBekelentloko. Wamchazela uMthendevu yonke incukacha yezinto ezazisenzeka. Umise indlebe yanye uBekelentloko kubonakala ukuba unento ayiphulaphuleyo. Wahamba waya endaweni emnyama. Uthene gaga nenja isitya ithambo. Wayiluma engakhange abe satsho nokuthi kwathini na. Eyona nto wayeyijongile ngamandla yayikukuhlutha ithambo akhe anqunqude naye.

Yaba nguqukulubhede apho. Zithcelele izinja zaseNjica zamluma uBekelentloko. NoSibi bangena emlweni bengakwinja yelali yabo. Kwadibana iingqeqe namabhaku namatwina. Zimane ukumka ngazinye ezaseNjica kanti zifunyenwe ngu-

Bekelentloko. Kude kwashiyeka ezinkulu zodwa, nazo wazichitha. Waphela umlo lowo engasenawo nomkro wokukhangela elo thambo wayelincwasile. Umzimba wakhe wawushushu wonke, izinja zimnxaphisile. Wahamba ke noBhaku baya kuncathama emzini owawumelene nalo wawunesisusa.

“Umshiye phi uXhonti?” wabuza uMthendevu kuBekelentloko.

“Ndiya qonda ukuba ukokwabo,” watsho uBekelentloko.

“Besiza konwaba ukuba ebekho apha.”

“Ewe, loo nja iyahlekisa,” wamchaza uTawuse, “kude kuthi khona xa iphakathi kweqela elikhulu lezinja.”

Izinja zaseNjica zathetha ngoBekelentloko zingamazi. Yambi kwezikhaliphileyo into yokoyiswa zizinja ezingezozelali yazo. Zasezisithi zobe zidibane nazo. Ngosuku lomgidi kwalungiselelwa ukupheka ukuphakama kwelanga. Izinja zaseNtakana zathi mazibe ngasebantwini zijonge ukufumana yonke into enokuthi inikwe izinja. Zazifumana zisekulo mzi unomgidi ezaseNjica. Zaqonda ukuba inkoliso yazo zezi zazisilwa nazo ngobusuku. UBekelentloko wahambahamba phakathi kwazo ngokungathi uthi zingenza into eziyithandayo. Zambona ukuba womelele.

Kwakungekho nja ingangaye kuzo. Nangoko zazimhlanga-nyele ngokuhlwa zazisenziwa kukuba zazingazanga zimbone ubungako nobunjalo bakhe. Zingcacele izinja zaseNjica azafuna ukuhlala apha phakathi komzi. OBhaku nangona babengabambahambi baziva bekhululekile. Yaqina imini kungekabikho nentwana abayibhaqayo enje ngokutya. Namathanjana awayekho ngawayelahlwe ngezolo kungasekho nto ikhukuzekayo kuwo.

“Tyhini naba oSibi apha!” wakhuza uKholisile bakuvela kuye. Wababiza, wababuza, “Nifuna ntoni apha?”

“Size kufuna le nto ize kufunwa nguwe,” wamxelela uBekelentloko.

“Yinto eyintoni le ndize kuyifuna?”

“Xa ngaba akuyazi nathi asiyazi.”

Imkhathazile uKholisile le ntetho. Wavakala esithi, “Yinto endiya kuyithini na le yokugwexwa yinja phakathi kwabantu abaninzi! Sahamba imigidi nezinja ngoku, Bekelentloko?”

“Uthi masibe sihleli kulaa mizi yenu sikhonkothela into engenambuyekezo?” watsho uBekelentloko.

UKholisile lo wayebone uTawuse yedwa ngezolo kwizinja

azaziyo. Wacinga ukuba unogxa bakhe basendle bodwa. Ukhangele into aza kuzibetha ngayo izinja. Zena zona zathi zole.

“Mfondini! Uphikele ukuchukela izinja zingenzanga nto,” watsho uJongani.

“Uthi mandingazibuzi ke?”

“Uzibuzelani? Akuzazi ukuba zisoloko zikho kwiindawo zcinamathambo?”

“Amathambo antoni? Zincenkomo zona?”

“Zifuywe sithi. Ngaloo nxa ke zifanele ukuwalanda amathambo cenkomo zethu, nokuba selephi na.”

“Nezi zihlala endle zikwafuywe nini?”

“Uzikhathalele ngantoni zona zingasezozakho nje?”

“Ume ngasezinjeni ngoku, mmelwane. Ndixelele ndazi.”

“Ewe,” wavuma uJongani.

UKholisile ufumene imvubu kumfo owaychamba naye. Wathi xa aqalayo ukuphakamisa ingalo ejonge ukubetha kuTawuse owayengaphambili kuzo zonke izinja, suke uMthendevu wamluma. Amadoda azame ukumhlangula, wahlala yena uJongani ejonge nje. Zibuye zonke izinja zakuva ingxolo. Zamtya selelele phantsi. EzaseNjica zazingayazi nento ayonileyo. Namhla uKholisile uvukelwe nazezazikade zimhloniphile. USibi wada wakha wamthi khonkqo ngamazinyo egxalabeni apha akayeka. Zibe zabaleka zakubona ukuba abantu baza kude bazaphule. Wavuka uKholisile wazivuthulula.

“He Tawuse, nenziwa yintoni le nto ningenasimilo?” ubuzile emveni kokuba etyiwe.

“Uyathanda nawe ukusoloko uzamana nathi,” watsho uTawuse.

“Ndokhe ndijonge ukuba oBambisela aba bona noBekelentloko baya kubheka phi na kwakuphela lo mgidi.”

Ube nexhala uSibi yakuthetha njalo inkosi yakhe. Yayikhohlakele gqitha, isoyikcka. Inja yona okokwayo yayiye iyibethele ukuba ife ukuba iyafa, ingayilinganiseli. Umane ukunikina intloko uKholisile ngoku selehleli phantsi, ebambelele ebunzi. Wayengqukrulekile, enesingqala. Ukutyiwa kwakhe kwadala ukuba igazi lezinja lihlobe. Zicinge ngokuya kuhlutha imbiza yenyama ebafazini. Ziphikisene, kukho ezingayingeniyo le nto.

“Masiye kuyithabatha,” wazincekelela uTawuse. “Ukuba asithanga sisebenzise amandla ethu asisayi kuzuza nto.”

Zide zaqonda zonke izinja, zavuma. Zibuzene ngecebo ezi-

nokuthi zivele ngalo ebafazini. UMthendevu wathi, “Kufuneka siye phaya ngasezimbizeni, size sithi sakufika kusuke izinja ezimbini zibambane zibe ngathi ziyalwa. Ezinye ke ziya kuluma yonke into engumntu ekufutshane neembiza. Kodwa kuya kulunga ukuba kubekho ezine eziza kubambisana ngeembiza ezimbini zenyama zibaleke nazo.”

“Iya kusanela na inyama esezimbizeni ezimbini?” wabuza uBhaku.

“Iya kude isale, kuba inkabi le ixheliweyo ityetyisiwe,” watsho uBekelentloko.

“Izinja mazingafumane zoyike,” wenjenjalo uTawuse. “Ama-doda, abona bantu banengozi, akude neembiza. Aya kuthi ethabatha ezo ntongana zawo sibe sesiyigqibile yonke into ebesijonge ukuyenza. Akanawo ke namendu okusukela thina njengokuba nisazi. Izinja ezingabambanga mbiza zothi zisoloko ziphose amehlo ngasebuhlanti zixele xa ezayo.”

Kukhethwe izinja eziza kwenza amacebo. UTawuse noBhaku kwathiwa mababe kwezi ziza kubaleka neembiza. Ezinye ezimbini ezaziza kwenza kwaloo msebenzi zazizezaseNjica. Ziyile kwicala ababekulo abafazi. Babesayiyizela kanye kukho nabazamisayo. Zibambene ngononjmi ke ezimbini, kwaqhuma uthuthu. Abafazi bema ngeenyawo, bambi bathabatha abantwana babo babafaka ekhwapheni. Azibanga sabaluma kodwa ziphithizele phakathi kwabo, zifuna bangaqondi neyona nto yenzekayo.

UTawuse ube yeyokuqala ukubamba imbiza kwezo zazinyuliwe. Amadoda othuswe yingxolo nasisikhalo. Abona kuqhuma ngasezimbizeni. Aqubule iintonga zawo aya kuloo ndawo yayinengxwabangxwaba. Indoda cyafika kuqala ngaseziko yakhuza ayalibala. Iimbiza zaziphantse ukubhukuqwa zonke, inyama iseluthuthwini. Kukho izinja ezasezibona ukuba maziziwise. Wangangakhala umnini-thecko akubona umonakalo onjalo.

“Nithe sisimanga santoni esi sihla ekhayapha namhlanje! Kutheni ingathi izinja ziza kusiphathela imbengwana nje!” wakhalima umnini-sisusa ebambebele emlonyeni.

“UTawuse akangekhe abe msulwa kwesi senzo,” waqiniseka uKholisile.

“UTawuse ke yiyiphiinja?” wafuna ukwazi umnini-thecko.

“Yile bendiza kuyibetha ukuze ndilunywe zizinja zonke.”

Bathe besamatshekile njalo abantu zabe izinja sezihleli apho zazibeke khona iimbiza. Bazivusile abafazi iimbiza ezaziwiswe zizinja, nenyama bayivuthulula bayifaka kuzo. Emdaka kakhulu bayinika amakhwenkwe. Abazanga babe nakuziqonda msinya iimbiza ezazimke nezinja. Zabelana izinja ngaloo nyama zaziyi-thabathile, zatya.

“Ndiyaqala ukuze ndidikwe yinyama okoko ndazalwayo,” utshilo uTawuse isisu sikralile. Nangona zazanele zonke, inyama yayingaphelanga. Zazifumane zayijonga nje ngamchlo. Kubekho indoda eza kule ndawo zazikuyo. Zathabatha inyama eyayisele zenka nayo, zanqena ukusindwa yimbiza, yayileyo yazibambela izidungulwana. Indoda ibe zibaleka nje kuba ziqhele ukwenjenjalo xa zibona umntu. Ize kuqabuka ngokusuke ibe kufuphi neembiza ukuba kukho into ebeziyenza. Yafika ingumhluzi wodwa, nawo sewunqumile. Yaya emzini onomgidi, apho yayisiya khona kakade, yahlangana nabantu besathetha ngento eyenziwe zizinja.

“Kanti ngoku ezi zinja zilapha emva komzi neembiza zenyama zigqiba kwenza le nto!” yakhuza le ndoda ifikayo.

Abantu bamangaliswa yiloo nto yokuthi kanti zinenyama ziyibileyo. Abafazi baqala baqwalasela iimbiza ababezibasela. Bazifumana zingekho ezimbini. Amadoda agqiba kwelokuba zibethwe izinja. Aya kuloo ndawo kwakusithiwa incembiza. Athe akufika zingasekho asclethabatha iimbiza egoduka nazo.

Ziphakiwe izidlo zakulunga, abantu batya balibala ngento yezinja.

“Siza kuhamba nini?” ubuzile uSibi ezinjeni zaseNtakana.

“Masilale apha, zininzi iindawo ezisithileyo,” watsho uTawuse kuye.

“Kode kube nini sisenza loo nto?” wabuza uSibi. “Andinakulala apha mna yonke imihla.”

“Kuncedani ukufumane ushiye amakhala apha usiya kwamanye kwaKholisile?”

“Awasemzini akafani nawakowenu.”

Into awayeyifuna ngamandla uTawuse yayikukufumana izinja ezininzi eziza kuhlala nabo endle. Nangoku zazibhoxa abantu wayevuya esazi ukuba ziza kuphelelwa ziindawo zokuhlala.

“Ndithi mna zonke izinja ebezilapha emini nje mazikhe ziye emakhayeni azo ziyokuva into eza kuthethwa ngabantu,” wenjenjalo uBekelentloko.

“Ziya kuthini ke bakuthi abasazifuni nganto?” watsho uTawuse.

“Kufuneka ziphinde zidibane apha, xa bathe bazigxotha, zizokuqonda into ezingayenzayo.”

“Mandikhe ndiphendule kweli gama likhutshwa nguTawuse,” watsho uSibi. “Abantu abanakho ukungasifuni thina zinja zise-semizini. Into abaza kuyenza bona ngokuqinisekileyo kukusibetha.”

Uthe uTawuse, “Ndiza kuthi ke mna ukuba izinja ziyagoduka zezingakhe zivume ukubethwa. Ukuba abantu bafunc ukuzibetha zezibuyele apha.”

“Ndingathanda ukukhe ndazi ukuba izinja ziyafuna na ukuya komakwazo,” watsho uMthendevu.

Zithe ziyafuna. Ziyibekile indawo emaze zidibane kuyo xa sezivela emizini. Zahamba ke.

“Nihambe kakuhle. Thina siya enkosini yethu. Asazi ukuba zothini na izinja ezingenankosi,” utshilo uBambisela ebhekisa ezinjini zaseNjica. Intetho yakhe yabadla oBhaku.

“Iya kuncamainja ukuba ikwesa thina. Eyethu indawo ikhona, singaxhalclanga mntu futhi,” watsho UTawuse. UTawuse lo wayengakufuni ukungaphindisi xa kukho into engathi iza ngakuye nokuba injani na. Nabo babezimisele ukuhamba noBambisela aba. Injongo zabo yayikukufuna ukuba bayive yonke into eza kuthethwa ngabantu kubo. Zithe xa zisiya emlanjeni ezaseNtakana zabona abantu. UKholisile zamva ngelizwi lakhe emnyameni ukuba ukho kubo. UTawuse ucebise ukuba mazibaleke izinja ziqale ziye kufika kwilali yazo ukuze zikhonkothe xa zisemizini zikhangele ukuba baza kuthini na abantu. USibi wayesoloko ephambili uBambisela yena ephakathi koBhaku. UTawuse uye kunina, wathi, “Ndiyaqonda ukuba uKholisile ungumsindo apho akhona. Uze umlumkele angakhe asondele kuwe.”

“Ukuba undibizile zendithini?” wambuza uSibi.

“Uze uthi akuzi.”

“Ukuba undisukele zendithini?”

“Nazi iinyawo kuwe. Uze ubaleke. Iinyawo ezi zenzelwa ukubainja izisindise ngazo.”

“Khawundiyeke, Tawuse. Sendiya kuyibona ngoko into eman-diyeznc.” Wayesel’ ecacile uSibi ukuba akasafuni namacebo angamanye ngaphandle kwala ayekuye engqondweni.

“*Ukuba ke, Tawuse, naningathethanga ngale nto yaseNjica ngendandingezanga sekude kuzokubanje nje ngoku*”, wamkhalazela uSibi.

“Besingakuqhubanga. Uzizele”, watsho uTawuse.

Izinja ziqonde into ethi maseziqala kwaKholisile. Ukungena kwazo kwakhe ziye endaweni emnyama. Zathi cwaka kwavakala ukuphefumla kodwa.

“Ndiyayoyika into eza kwenziwa nguKholisile namhlanje”, watsho uBhaku ckrweca uTawuse.

“Nango amadoda sel’ edumzela kufutshane”, waweve uMthendevu.

“Amanye la eza apha aya phi engabheki kwamawawo nje”, wamangaliswa uSibi. Wayenengcamango ethi aza kwenza imeko ibe nzima ngaphezulu kokuba yayihleli iza kuba nzima xa edibene noKholisile.

“Makukhonkothe wena Tawuse”, wamchonga uBhaku.

Zilindile izinja ukuba amadoda ade abe phambi kwezindlu. Akuphuma phakathi kwazo zawabona kakuhle.

“Hawu! hawu!! hawu!!!” wakhonkotha uTawuse. Wahleka esakugqiba.

“Khanime! Ingathi yinja nje le itshoyo”, watsho uKholisile ebeka isandla ezindlebeni emamela.

“Zizo ezo akuphazami. Nathi sizivile”, amngqinela amadoda.

“Zikhonkotha kweliphi icala?” wafuna ukuqonda.

“Zingasebuhlanti”.

“Akukho zinja bezishiyekile apha elalini? Nicinga ukuthi ingazeziya bezisemgidini zalapha?”

“Kungenzeka kuthi kanti zizo”, yatsho inkosi kaBekelentloko.

“Izinja kaloku zona ziyakhawuleza, azifani nathi”.

Kwangoko amadoda abe sel’ esiya ngasebuhlanti engacelwanga.

“Nivule amehlo, bafondini, zinganiqubuli”, watsho uKholisile. Onke ayengazanga ayithande into eyayenzeke kuye ngaphandle kukaJongani. Yena ke wayengasekho kula ejike endleleni wabheka emzini wakhe.

“Yintoni le ithi hawu! hawu! apha ngathi yinja?” wabuza uKholisile esekude ebuhlanti. Ayekhokelwe nguye ukuya kwawo kuzo. Ukhe wavuthuza ngomnqayi wakhe emakhaleni zisakungabonakali.

“Ndiya kuyibulalainja ukuba ndikhe ndayibona emzini wam

apha", wafunga uKholisile ekhangela ngenyameko.

Inkosi kaBekelentloko idlule namanye amadoda. Akuba esendlwini uKholisile ubize inkwenkwe yakhe endala.

"Ukhe wababona phi oBambisela?" wayibuza.

"Ndiragqibele kusasa izolo", yatsho inkwenkwe.

"Into abandenze yona mnt' ana'm, imbi ngendlela engathe-thekiyo. Andisoze ndiyilibale ebomini."

"Batheni?"

"Ubungekho emgidini?"

"Hayi".

"Uyabona ukuba umzimba wam uzele amanxeba?" watsho ctyhila ingubo yakhe uKholisile.

Yoyika inkwenkwe isakuwujonga. Yabuza indlela enzakale ngayo uyise. Wayichazela bethu isizeka bani.

"Ke, mfo wam, biza amanye amakhwenkwe, nithabathe iintonga zenu niye kwezi zikhundla zidla ngokuba kuzo izinja. Nize nithi ukuba nikhe nayibamba yanye niyibethe kakhulu.

Andingeze ndakhathala nokuba nizibulele xa ninendlela. Andinakuba nje kanti ndiza kunyamezela ukuhlala namaramncwa aya kusuke andibulale mhla athandileyo. Zibetheni! Kutsho mna".

"AsingoTawuse kodwa aba bakulumileyo?"

"OTawuse bantoni? Kwiziganeko ezibini ezenzeka eNjica andikhanganga ndibabone bezikhetha oSibi. Yenza le nto ndikuxelela yona, kwedini, us'ke ube undibuza ukuba asingoTawuse na".

Yaphuma inkwenkwe yaya kubaninawa bayo cyayihleli nabo. Unina nodade wayo bakhawuleza ukuya kwindlu cyayino-Kholisile isakubachazela ukuba wenzakele. Baqhweba izandla besakuva into cyenziwe zizinja.

"Ukuba izinja aziphumanga nesidumbu kulo mnyaka wodwa ndiya kuthi lithamsanqa", watsho umkaKholisile, ebhinqa isikhaka sakhe chamba.

Izinja zacinga ngezizigqibo ezazizenzile zokudibana kunzi owa-wunomgidi. UMthendevu wafuna ukuba ziphethuke msinyane.

"Yima, Mthendevu", utshilo uSibi. "Kaloku kuya kufuneka ukuba sikhe sithethe nenkosi yethu ubuso ngobuso, singoyikeli kude".

"Uza kuthetha ni nayo?" wabuza uMthendevu.

"Ndifuna ukuqonda nje ukuba iza kuthini na ngokubhekiselele kulaa nto yase Njica".

“Ungafa ukuba ukhe wema phambi kwayo namhlanje”, wamlumkisa uBekelentloko. “Ndikuxelela inenc. Ubuyiva xa ibithetha apha ukufika kwayo. Andazi nokuba ke ufuna ukugqonda ukuba iya kwazi nyani na ukubulalainja”.

“Ezinye izinja czi azizukuba saya czinkosini zazo?” wabuza uSibi “Ziye kwenzani? Azicingi”.

“Ziya kude zithini ukuze zibheke emakhayeni azo?”

“Zingaya ngomso xa umsindo lo wabantu udambile”.

NoSibi wabona ukuba mabasebedibana noKholisile ngosuku olulandelayo. Zaya kufika eNjica sekusebusuku. Zangxola zakuhlangana zonke, iyileyoinja ixela uhambo lwayo. Ezinye zazigxothiwe kumawazo. Kukho ke nezazibethiwe, kodwa loo nto ingenziwanga ngentando yazo. Uzimisile uTawuse wathi: “Niya bona ke nani zinja ukuba abantu abasasifuni emizini yabo. Niya buza ke ukuba icebo yintoni na xa kunjalo. Lithi ke elam, siya kuthi ukuze silunge sibe nendlela yethu yokuziphilela. Thina singoTawuse nje sesinazo iindlela zokuzimela. Njengokuba silapha nje sesincentsuku ezininzi singekho mizini yabantu. Inxalenye yezinja ezilapha iyazi ukuba ndinyanisile, andithethi nje kuba kusebusuku kumnyama. Kufuneka simke sonke thina silapha sibheke chlathini kumawethu, apho sinokuhlala intlalo entle kunale. Ndisatshonela zinja,” wasebezelainja yelali yakhe uZonele.

“Ndingathanda ukuba ndazi, Tawuse, ukuba amawenu ngawaphi na”, watsho uBambisela.

“Zezaa zilwanyana zischlathini. Sikunye nazo, nto nje sahlulwa ngaba bantu kudala baya kusigcina emizini”, waxela uTawuse. “Nayiphi nainja enqwenela ukuthetha ingaphakama”, waphinda watsho uTawuse.

USibi uthe akahambisani naloo nto yena.

“Ubusithi makwenziweni na wena?” wabuza uMthendevu kunina.

“Nikhumbule ukuba asikadibani sonke neenkosi zethu. Sijonge ukuya kuzo, sicele uxolo. Mhlawumbi zinganovelwano ngathi zisiyeke sihlale emizini yazo noko besizikhathazile”, watsho uSibi.

“Yimizi ayincekelele ngani na le uma kodwa?” wamangaliswa uMthendevu.

“Kuza kukhe kuthethe mna ke ngoku”, wavela watsho uBhaku.

“Andinangqondo ithi kungakhoinja evunyelwayo ukuba ihlale phakathi kwabantu ngokunjce. Zingakho czinye kodwa ingezizo ezi bezilapha emgidini emini”.

“Asizikuva ngawe. Ubazela phi na wena abantu?” watsho uSibi. “Ndabazi ndisandula ukuzalwa, ukuba uxela mna. Nguweinja engasayi kuze ibaqonde. Okoko waqhathwa uzalwa usaqhathwa nanamhlanje. Andilwazi nolu xolo uxhincele ukuya kulucela koKholisile ukuba lolwantoni na. Ungabayeki nje bahlale namanxeba abo yintoni?”

Ingoxo ibenkulu phakathi kukaSibi noBhaku. Uninzi lwezinja luyichasile into ethethwa nguSibi, kodwa yabakho imbinana eyayime ngakuye.

“Yimfa leyo, yimfa leyo”, utshilo uSibi kusabanjwene ngentetho. “Ningothuki ndim”, kuvakele kukho ilizwi elitshoyo kanti lelenja yaseNjica efikayo. Ixcelwe ngento ebithethwa.

“Ndiyeyokuqalainja ukuya kuma endle”, yazinikela le nja ifikayo.

“Oko ndingafanga namhlanje, andisoze ndifumane ndife”, yatsho. Inkosi yayo yayibetha kwaphela iintswazi. Ukuvuma kwayo ukuya endle kuzenze nezazingafuni ukuhamba zanga koTawuse. Kwasala uSibi noBambisela. Zifune ukubheka endle kwangobo busuku ezaseNjica, waza wala uTawuse esithi makukhe kulindwe amaphinda omgidi. Akazanga abe safuna nokuzimamela oku uSibi kuloo nto. Ekuseni bemka noBambisela begoduka. Bathi besakuba kokwabo wathi thimbilili uBambisela akafuna ukuba angavela czindlwini.

“Yiza sihambe”, wamruqa unina. “Musa ukuthingaza,” Babetha phambi kwendlu yokuqala baya kuma ngakweyesibini. Kulapho uKholisile wayehlala khona kuleyo. Kwakungekho mntu phandle, ekubonakala ukuba babengekavuki. Uphumile umninimzi ngokungathi ubevile ukufika kwabo. Wahlehla kwa oko uBambisela akumbona.

“Ndanga ndibona ntoni na nje xa ndibona izinja”, watsho uKholisile ethambekisa intloko esinekile. Iingubo zakhe wayezicombulule zaya kuma emaqatheni. Yangathi kuSibi uza kusuke azilahle phantsi amtsibece

“Nivela phi, Sibi?” wambuza.

“Sivela kude, nkosi”, watsho uSibi.

“Kude phi kule ndawo ingenagama?”

“Besiphaya cNjica kulaa mzi ubunomgidi”.

“Sekukokwenu ngoku phaya le nto ningaseziyo ekhaya?”

“Hayi, nkosi, silahlekiswe ngoTawuse bathi masingabuyi”.

“Benibangelwa yintoni ukuba nilahlekiswe ngoTawuse beziinjana?”

“Kukoyika nkosi yam engaphezulu kwazo zonke iinkosi”.

“Yintoni le beniyoyika ingade inenze ukuba niye kulala emgidingini iintsuku ezininzi?”

“Kukubethwa”.

“Beniza kubethwa ngubani, xa bekutheni?” wamngcambazisa uKholisile. “Nguwe, nkosi”, watsho uSibi.

“Bebesithi unokuba ukhathazekile yinto eyenzeka kuwe phaya kulaa mzi”.

“Yinto eyintoni leyo yenzeke kum?”

“Sibone ukutyiwa kwakho zizinja, phofu thina noBambisela singakhanga sikulume”.

“Yiza apha Sibi”, yambizela endlwini inkosi yakhe.

Ijikile xa isemnyango yakhwaza uBambisela. Akeza kuyo.

“Ukuba bendinguwe mna ngendisiza kwangoku ndiphelclelwe lixhala”, yatsho.

Ibuzile kuSibi xa seyingaphakathi endlwini ukuba ziphi na ezinye izinja zelali.

“Zisele eNjica. Sibuya sobabini noBambisela”, waxela uSibi. Uthule wathula uKholisile wesuka wathi, “Ndiza kukhe ndikubethe kanobom, Sibi. Inye qha into endiza kukubethela yona kukuhamba neziqhu czingatshongo khona”.

“Sel’undixolela, nkosi, andisoze ndiphinde ndihambe nazo”, wathandaza uSibi.

“Andinakho konke”, wala uKholisile, “kwaye ndinayo nenkolo yokuba ukhe walifaka nawe izinyo kum apha, wayiba nenyama”.

Wambetha ke wagxwala. Wamyeka ngokusuke kudinwe ingalo. Ukrobe uBambisela kwakhona, wambiza kanjaqo. Suke uBambisela waye ebhekela kude endaweni yokusondela.

“Kanti akusokube uze kuhlala apha ndingakubethanga”, watsho emtyityimbisela umnwe. “Ndiyazazi ndisitsho nje”.

Uye kungena kwindlu eyayinentsapho yakhe wafunela uSibi ukutya.

“Ungabuye uphinde ube phakathi kwezinja czingenambeko”, wamyala xa amphayo.

“Ndivile, nkosi”, wavuma uSibi.

Ube nosizi uKholisile, kuba eneneni uSibi lo yiyona nja yayilulamile kwizinja awayekhe wanazo, imgcinile ngaphezulu.

UBambisela umkhwazile unina eli xesha atyayo wathi makamphathele nokuba liqhekezana. Watya yena uSibi engafuni kuziqhwayela ukhwembekhwembe. Ungqungele kufutshane uBambisela enqwenela ukutya. Wahlutha engekafiki ekutyeni ngenxa yokoyika. Kwakuphela wathi: "Noko, ma uya vimba".

"Oku kutya ibe ikokwam nedwa", watsho uSibi. "Useza kukufumana wena okwakho".

UBambisela weva selebethwa yinkosi kaBekelentloko engayazi nalapho ivele ngakhona.

Le nkosi kaBekelentloko yayize kugqitha kuKholisile apha ukuba baye emaphindeni omgidi.

"USibi lo umyekele ntoni apha, mfondini?" yabuza isakudibana noKholisile.

"Ndithe mandimyeke ahlale, mmelwane. Naleya wena ingaphaya komzi ndiza kuyiyeka. Iza kubuye ibuye emagqagaleni isakuva iphango. Iya kufika ndikho ndingayanga ndawo, ndiseza kuyibetha."

Kude kwalithuba lokuba bahambe oKholisile. Uthe vumbululu ematyeni uBambisela xa beshiya izindlu, waya kutshona emasimini.

"Ikwa yeyam loo ntsimi uzimela kuyo. Ndingeza kukukhupha apho ndithanda", wakhwaza uKholisile. Babengamanga ngoko.

Bafika emzini owawunomgidi sebebani abantu, kodwa kungekho zinja. Uzibuzile uKholisile ejonge ukukhupha isixhiba. Amadoda athi zisezixhotyeni kudana. Kangangendlela awayezizungula ngayo wayefuna nokuya kuzizingela apho.

"Yintoni ezi zinja zingakhe zize ngapha namhlanje", watsho evonya intonga yakhe.

"Mfondini yahlukana nezinja, kuba ziya kuphinda zikuqukaquke apha", itshilo enye indoda eliqhula.

"Azicingi namhlanje. Nayizolo zenziwe kukuba bendingingazilindelanga."

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Emva kwemini izinja zasondela ngasebantwini. Abafazi baququzela bethutha iimbiza zabo bezisa ezindlwini. Amadoda axokozela. Yayingavakali kakuhle into awayeyithetha. Lizwi lakha lavakala lelikaKholisile elathi: "Inene namhlanje kunamhlanje, siza kuqubisana".

"Uholonga nje lowa akazi nento le", watsho uTawuse, ebhekisa ezinjeni.

Ngoku athetha le nto abantu abadala babezizongile, amakhwenkwe egquba kubonakala ukuba acela umngeni. Phofu ayesoloko ephakathi kwabantu engade eze ngakuzo.

"Into endithe nqa yiyo yile yokuba kusuke kungxame amakhwenkwe kungekho nanto ayifunayo. Ayafana nje nathi ngokuhathwa", ikwa nguTawuse lowo utshoyo.

UMthendevu: "Eyona nto akasilingananga wona".

"Amakhwenkwe makakhe eze ngapha", wawakhweba uBhaku.

Kwanzima ukusuka ebantwini kodwa evile. Zenze iincoko ke apho izinja zingavumi ukude ziye ebantwini, nabantu bengahlali phantsi. Zithume iinjana ezimbini ukuba ziye kuziccelela ukutya ebantwini. Zahamba iinjana zingenanto ziyoyikayo zona. Zazingayiqondi zona nengxabano le yayiphakathi kwezinja nabantu. Nangona zazilubonile udushc ngezolo zazisithi kuyadlalwa. Zazingaphantsi kakhulu apha koTawuse ngobudala.



Uruqe umnqayi wakhe uKholisile zakuba kufuphi nendawo ckwakuphekkelwe kuyo, wazihlangabeza. Uthethe nje nazo ithutyana clingephi wazigxotha. Zikhe zathalalisa zisithi uza kube aziyeke ziye kubaninizo.

“Ndithi kuni mkani apha”, wazilekuza ngenduku. Zaphapha-theka ukuya kwezinye.

“Kufuneka zesichwechwe ngobusuku size kuba konke ukutya okugcinwe ngabantu kulo mzi”, watsho UBekelentloko.

UBhaku wabuza wathi: “Koba kusekho na ngokuhlwa?”

“Abanakho ukukugqiba abantu kuba kusoloko beneemfihlo”.

“Siya kukufumana njani kuya kube kusendlwini nje ngoko?”

“Badla ngokukubeka kwindlu eyodwa esecaleni”.

“Siya kukhe sizame ke, Bekelentloko”, watsho uBhaku.

Zivuyile izinja emva kweli cebo. Naloo ndawana yokulamba bezinayo yaphela ibangwa lithemba. Zithethe ngokukhe ziye kumxwala abantu. Zaya kutsho emva komzi lowo wawunabantu, zakha zema apho.

Le ndawo zazimi kuyo yayibusithela emzini apha kuba wawusecaleni leenduli. Into ezaziyifuna yayikukubaleka nje ziyokuphuma phakathi kwezindlu baze bathi besothuka abantu zibe sezigqithile. Kube nzima ngoku ukuya emzini. Ezindala zazisithi makukhokele ezincinane, ezincinane zona zifuna ukuba ibe zezindala phambili.

“Sijonge ukuthi bathi besiza kuthi abantu nibe senikude nina. Thina zinja sesikwazi ukuphepha abanakusichana nokuba sivelile kubo. Yiyo loo nto ke sithi khokelani”, wazityhilela ngolo hlobo uBekelentloko iinjana. Zala nangoko.

“Kulungile ke siza kukhokela, ‘ze nilandele nina”, utshilo uBhaku ebiza uTawuse noMthendevu efuna ukuba babe ngakuye. Bona babengabalelwa kwizinja ezincinane. Zilungisile ke izinja ngokwabantu beza kwenza amahuku. Zagqotsa ukubheka emzini. Zashiyashiyana zisanduluka nje. Zigqithe kwindoda eyayisajikele emva komzi. “Tyhini luya phi olu gxudululu lwezinja!” yakhuza. Aziyihoyanga zabaleka. Ezincinane zazinakasa emva. Ibe yaqonda ukuba ziya kona abantu, yaza yathi, “Iwu!” Abantu bayiva msinya loo ntlabamkhosi. Kwakuxa seziphakathi kwezindlu eziphambili. Bazibonile ke abantu. UKholisile wagilwa wawa xa atsibela intonga yakhe.

“Ngubani kodwa lo undenza into embi ezi zinja ziza kude zindishiye nje?” wacaphuka. Uvukile wayichola. Amadoda ayakufika ngasezindlwini sezigqithile inkoliso yazo. Iinjana ezimbini zavelela amadoda. Alahla ngecentonga. Ngethamsanqa yasinda enye, iphuma phakathi kwazo. Eyayisemva kanye ayibetha yasadalala, yafela apho phambi kwezindlu.

Zakuba sezantsi komzi izinja ezindala zikhangele ngasemva. Le njana yayisindile yayisabaleka ngamandla ikhala. "Iphi enye injana?" ubuzile uBhaku kuyo isakufika kubo.

"Andiyazi", yatsho ukuphendula.

Watsho kwa oko uTawuse wathi: "Ifile apho ikhona".

"Asiyiyo kodwa leya ilele phaya ingqongwe ngabantu?" watsho ekroba uBekelentloko, eqwalasela emzini apho.

Zihleli ke zilindile, zilindele injana ezingayazi nokuba yoze ibuye na. Zibone nto itsalwa ngamakhwenkwe eyirugela ezantsi komzi, kwasala into emnyamana emva kwawo esakujika.

"Yile njana siyifumayo leya ibekwa ngamakhwenkwe phaya", watsho uMthendevu.

"Kuya kulunga sikhe siye phaya khon'ukuze siqonde", wenjenjalo uBekelentloko. Waza wathi kwayena makulambe izinja ezintathu zaseNjica ibe nguye lo wesinc. Yangophopho bodwa ke abo.

Okunene zafumana ukuba yiyo, kodwa seyipholile, zafumana zema phezu kwayo. Abantu babezijingile benengqondo ethi mhlawumbi zingeza kubo zibaxoxise. UKholisile wathi: "Kudala Bekelentloko, ndikubona ukuba ungumququzeleli wobubi. Nayizolo ibinguwe intshokotsheli apha".

UBekelentloko wathi, "Uthi kutheni na kum apha?" Akaphinda athethe uKholisile noBekelentloko wamyeka.

"Bendiyiqonda ukuba le nto iya kuba nje ekugqibeleni", itshiloinja yakulole ifileyo.

"Ubukade ungathethi nje ixesha eli lonke ubuhlalele ni?" wayingxamela uTawuse.

"Imbi into eniyenzileyo ngokubulalisa injana".

"Ibe lilishwa noko", watsho uBhaku. "Into enje ngale ayinakuphinda ihle". Wayesitsho nje wayesoyika ukuba le nja imke; ibe mhlawumbi yayingazi kumka yodwa.

Zibonile ukuba maziye kusithela izinja, zilinde kude kube sebusuku. Zahamba kancinane zidanile yinto cyenzekileyo. Zalungiselela ukuya ngasemizini zakuqonda ukuba sekumnyama. Zazilazi ixesha abalala ngalo abantu. Kwakungekho nenja enye yokukhonkotha eNjica loo mini. Mazwi ezinja ayevakala ayenkenteza nakho ayevakala kwiilali ezikude kuba kwakuzolile. Zithe zisahleli zabona bantu babini. Zaxcelelana ngabo.

"Yangathi ngobani nje aba?" watsho eqwalasela uZonele. Wayebiza omnye umntu amaziyo waseNjica apho.

UBhaku: "Fan'ukuba ngamaqela agodukayo aphuma emaphindeni".

"Masibatye", watsho uBekelentloko.

"Ukuba kukhoinja engayithandiyo into esiza kuyenza yothi izixele kwangoku, ingayenzi, ingathi kwakubela into kamva kubekuxa ikhalazayo", wacacisa watsho uTawuse. Akuzanga kubekho nja ithi ayikholwa kukuba ababantu mabatyiwu. Nale yayivele nengxoxo kwakufa eyakowayo yayikholwa. Izinga ezinkulu zaziya ezincinane ukuba zingakhe zithi leke zisondele ebantwini zona.

"Asisafuni kubona njana ifileyo kwakhona", watsho uBekelentloko.

Zancedakala iinjana kuba zazihleli zisoyika. Bezile abantu, behamba bevuma; zaqiniseka ezaseNjica ukuba ngaba kanye zibaziyo. Ekucacile ukuba babevuma bodwa emnyameni nje babefumene iingxotha neevanya. Ngqavu! watsho kuqala uBekelentloko. Mfo ngamnye wayilahla loo ngoma yakhe wacula yimbi. Oko kukuthi wakhala.

"Iphiinja?" ubuzile uTawuse komnye.

"Andinatyalakonke mna", watsho umntu. "Injana ayibulawanga sithi".

"Ibulewe ngubani?"

"Ngumntu obephaya emgidini, endingamazanga igama lakhe".

"Akuxoki kodwa?"

"Okuya nina benithe qhiwu iminqayi benisiya kwenzani?"

"Yintonga yam yokusimelela le, nantsi nangoku kum," waqokela watsho. "Iyavakala ubunzima obu bayo ukuba asiyo yokulwa".

"Usimelela njani ngayo xa uyiphakamisele phezu?"

"Noko xa ndimile a", ufumene ithuba lokuphuncula umntu. Wabhekeqeka ukuhla egedukeni chlatywa nazizihlahla waya kuphumla endlwini kumzi owawumi phantsi kwenduli.

"Yintoni wangena ungankqonkqozanga?" yabuza indoda yalo mzi.

"Izinga", yabiza elo gama nje kuphela le ingenayo.

Abantu basebekhawuleza bevala iingcango becinga ukuba zingangena nanini na. Babesebezibonile ubudlanga bazo. Izinga zazingazanga zibe sayisukela zona, kodwa yathi ngenxa yephaphu ayabiseva nokujika kwazo. Eyesibini indoda yabaleka yaya kungena emzini wayo. Azibanga sahlala ke endlwini. Zaya

kuma kufutshane nomzi ezaziza kuba kuwo. Kwakungekalalwa, imililo yayisabasiwe ezindlwini. Zilindile ke kwada kwacinywa izibane, zonda ngezindlu.

“Sifumana sichwechwela ntoni abantu bengasayi kube bavuke nje. Noku kuthi bavuke ebusuku sukuba besenziwa kukukhonkotha kwezinja. Ke, xa zingekho akukho kuvuka kubo”, watsho uTawuse czihambela nje kakuhle.

Zonke ke zalinganisa yena. Nezalo mzi kwakusiyiwa kuwo izinja zazikho phakathi kwezi. Zakuba phambi kwendlu esecaleni zikhe zema zathethana. Ziye emnyango zalinga ucango, zalutyhiliza lwaya kubetheka eludongeni. Kuthe kanti umninimzi uluvile ukukhala kwalo waza waphuma wema ebaleni wathi: “Yintoni leyo igozoqayo apho?” Zabaleka akutsho. Ukuviwa kwazo kuzidale umsindo.

“Kanti abantu abakalali!” watsho uBekelentloko.

“Yeka wena baza kubuye balale kamsinya, akukho nto baza kuyenza”, wamqinisa uTawuse.

Umninimzi uye kwindlu esekugqibeleni wafumana ucango luth e qengqelele kuba izinja azibanga saluvala. Wakhanga ngela apha emthomyameni naphakathi komzi ecinga ukuba angafumana nto, kodwa akwabi njalo. Uvuse amakhwenkwe waya nawo kule ndlu yayinokutya. “Niyalubona na makwedini ukuba olu cango luvulekile?” watsho.

“Ewe, siyalubona”, aphenula atsho, noko kwakukho nanga-luboniyo bubuthongo.

“Abantu bangayenza into yokuba bandibele ndakugqiba ukubapha ukutya nenyama?”

“Bangakubela abakhohlakeleyo”, atsho amakhwenkwe.

“Hayi andiqondi ukuba ingangabo aba: nto yimbi le ibivula olu cango. Kakade zona czi zinja bezigqithagqitha zibaleka apha emini ziye kuphelela phi?”

“Sizigqibele ukuya kutshona kwazo endlulini”.

“Ifancle ukuba ngumkhwa wazo lo; kwaye ndiyakrokra ngathi ziza kuba nonyawo lwemfene”, watsho umninimzi.

Wacinga kakhulu. Wathuma amakhwenkwe ukuba aye kulanda izikhali endlwini. Ahamba abuya nazo. Ngoku wahlala nawo ngasemakhaleni, ingulowo ephethe esakhe isikhali.

“Nokuba ngumntu lo wale nto, nokuba zizinja ziya kufela apha”, watsho lo mfo.

“Mandingakhathazwa”.

Bathe sebencamile besiya ezindlwini, zavela izinja. Zazikhe zime maxa wambi kubonakala ukuba ziyalondla.

“Masijike”, utshilo uTawuse ebhekisa kuBekelentloko.

“Hayi, Tawuse, ungasoyikisi”, wamnyala uBekelentloko.

Indoda yayibakrweca futhi oonyana bayo. Ngako oko ngekuba yayisithi niya sibonana esi simanga. Besukile abantu zisakuphelela zonke endlwini, bahamba ngenzwane befuna ukuba zingabeva. Inja yalo mzi icinge ukuba ikhe iye kukroba emnyango. Yathi xa ivelayo wayinkinteza ngentonga entanyeni umniniyo.

“Nini kanti aba bazama ukwenza intlondi!” wabinza ephi-ndelela.

Angena endlwini amakhwenkwe cfuna ukubulala ezinye, kodwa athi ngenxa yobumpatha aziphosa zasinda.

“Ayinamsebenzi into yokubhaqwa kwethu”, watsho uBekelentloko kwezinye. Kwakungekabikho nto ziyifumencyo.

UTawuse: “Masibheke kwindawo ebesikade sikuyo phambi kokuba kubekho lo mgidi”.

“Ngekuba siyakuva koko silambile”, yatsho enyeinja, “siya kufika njani ke kuloo ndawo?”

“Asikalambi kangankokuba singade singakwazi nokuhamba oku. Futhi ngomso ayisobe isweleke into yokutya”, wathetha watsho uTawuse.

Zazingamashumi amahlanu anomvo ubuninzi bazo. Ukuwela kwazo umlambo zabethwa ngumoya obandayo, imizimba le yazo yarwaqela. Esihlabeni uTawuse noBhaku noMthendevu bangene emqolombeni ababekade belala kuwo. Azibanga nakwanela apho zonke.

“Noko ayifanelanga ukuba nini abahlala kwindawo cfudumeleyo ukuze thina sibe phandle”, yatsho enyeinja yaseNjica.

“Ayinasizathu loo nto. Ngaphaya koko emizini benityiwa ziingqele nilaliswa phandle”, watsho uTawuse.

“Nithi masize kwenzani ke apha kanti nje nani niza kuqhuba kwangale ndlela bebeqhuba ngayo abantu kuth’apha?” yabuza le nja.

“Hayi, wena, le ndawo incinane xa sithetha inyaniso”, wayicisela uMthendevu.

“Kungani ke ukuba kungalali izinja ezibhityileyo neziselula kuyo?”

Uhle wayiqonda naye uMthendevu le nto, wabe sel’ezibizela phandle ezo zinja wabe enazo ngaphakathi.

Ilizwe ezazizalelwe kulo ezi zinja lalithandwa kakhulu zimvula, kungakumbi khona entwasa-hlobo nasehlotyeni.

Yana ngaloo mhla zaziqokelelene apho esihlabeni kwasa zimanzi. Ezazingadibene neenkosi zazo zazingasafuni kuya kumawazo sezizimisele emfudukweni.

“Niyazi ke nonke zinja ukuba asiphcelelanga apha”, watsho uTawuse. “Indawo esijonge ukuya kuhlala kuyo kusehlathini. Siya kuthi xa imizimba yethu seyifudumele sihambe. Ndiya-themba ukuba siza kuhamba kakuhle, kuba nemvula iyekile”.

Izinja zabona abantu besithi wayi-wayi besiya ngasemzini wakuloBhaku, bema isidala apho.

“Masiye kwabaya bantu siyokuqonda ukuba kwenzeka ntoni na”, wazicela ezinye uBhaku.

Zafika kukho ihashe elifileyo. Yayilelomi owawukwa kule lali yaseNtakana. Lathi kuba lalikusuphi nemizi amadoda athi maliruqelwe kude etafeni.

“Malembelwe ukuze izinja ezingafuni bantu zingalifumani”, utshilo uKholisile, egxeshe uBhaku. “Nizibona zilapha nje zincwase lona”.

“Yinto engancedi nto loo nto kuba ziza kuligrumba nangobusuku kulelwe”, yatsho inkosi kaBhaku.

Yenzani ngokubona kwenu ke”, wavuthulula izandla uKholisile. Kuthunywe amakhwenkwe ukuba alitsalele endle, abopha iinkabi zane emka nalo.

“Khanitsho ke Tawuse, le mizi nanikhala ngokuba niya kuzakhela iphi?” ubuzile uKholisile ezinjani xa agodukayo. “Nanixela laa mingxuma nilala kuyo phaya esihlabeni?”

“Wena lowo wakho wawakha ngeentsuku ezimbini?” watsho uTawuse.

“Hayi!”

“Singathini ke thina ukumisa eyethu ngexesha elifutshane, nokuba uswele into ongayithethayo?”

“Ndiyakuva ke, kodwa into endingayifuniyo yile yokuba niyokujikeleza umzi wam ngobusuku ndingasanithembanga kakuhle”.

“Asoze siye kwakho, sawushiya loo mzana wakho siwubona”.

UKholisile udibene noXhonti ebaleka esiya ezinjani.

“Nawe ufuna ukuya kufela apho ungaziyo?” watsho.

UXhonti wathi ezinjani, “Bendiba senimkile. Bendiya kuva kakubi xa ninokuya ehlathini ningandazisanga”.

“Thina besisoloko sicinga ukuba akufuni kuhamba”, watsho uTawuse.

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Izinja zathi maziqale ngokuya kutya ihashe phambi kokuba ziye chlathini. Zaya kulo ilanga selifuna ukuqina. Lalibekwe kwindawo evelileyo apho esihlabeni. Ziphawule ukuba kukho izinja ezimbini ezihleli ngakulo, kwakho nesicuku seentaka esingekude apho ezinjeni. Zangxama zicinga ukuba zinokufika liphelile ihashe. Kuthe kanti ezi zinja nguSibi noBambisela.

“Tyhini! seniligqibile ihashe ebelilikhulu kangaka!” watsho kubo uMthendevu emangalisiwe.

“Hayi, alikapheli. Naliya lityiwa ngamaxhalanga”, watsho uSibi.

“Kaloku kutheni niliyekele ezintakeni nje?”

“Akukho nja inokufumane isondele emaxhalangeni, Mthendevu”, watsho uBekelentloko emjongile.

“Ngokwenziwa yini? Izinja ziyoyiswa ziintaka kakade?”

“Yiyekeni le njana ayazi nto”, watsho uSibi chleka.

UBekelentloko uthe makaye kuzisusa iintaka. Wesuka waya kuzo.

“Buya apho, Mthendevu ukuba akufuni kufa”, watsho unina.

“Uthi thina sihleli apha nje sinantoni? Zizilwangangubo eziya aziyontanga yanja. Ungacingi ukuba ziya kusuka zibaleke kuba zibona wena”.



“Kuya kude kuthiweni ke?” wafuna ukuqonda uMthendevu.

“Siza kulinda zide zimke”, waphendula watsho uXhonti.

“Yinto yanini leyo yokumka kwazo ndifuna inyama nje mna?”

“Ziza kuhamba wena zisakuhlutha”, watsho uXhonti.

Uthethe kakhulu uMthendevu noBekelentloko efuna ukuqonda into eyenza ukuba izinja zoyiswe ngamaxhalanga.

“Uyabona, Mthendevu”, wenjenjalo uBekelentloko, “ixhalanga asintaka ukomelela. Linomlomo oquthu olukhuni. Libetha kube kanye esikhumbeni schashe sigrabhuke. Izinja zona okokwazo ziintwana ezincinane kulo. Alifumane life nokuba selibethwe entloko ngabantu”.

Wakholelwa uMthendevu ukuba le nto ithethwa nguBekelentloko makube yinyani xa izinja zinokude ziyeke inyama ngenxa yokoyika iintaka.

“Ahlala phi amaxhalanga la?” wabuza kwakuBekelentloko uMthendevu.

“Ahlala emahlathini”, waphendula watsho uBekelentloko.

“Eve ngantoni ukuba kukho ihashe elifileyo apha?”

“Kuthiwa axcelelwa ngamagwanga xa kukho into elifileyo. Endingazi ke nokuba loo nto injalo na kuba andiziqondi kakuhle izinto zeeentaka”.

“Phofu izinja akazisukeli xa zingawakhathazi?”

“Hayi. Uyawabona nangaya amanye entingela esibhakabhakeni”, wamkhombisa uSibi, “aseza kwalapha nawo”.

Waqethuka ke uMthendevu ewakhela umkhanya kuba aye-ngaselangeni, limphandla ke.

“Anamabala amnyama apha czimpikweni, neentsiba zawo zivulekile”, waqaphela uMthendevu.

“Kaloku alungiselelwe ukuphapha”, watsho uBekelentloko.

“Uva kumana kusithiwa ‘Xhalanga elimaphiko ankone nje’ ke, Mthendevu xa kubongwa ixhalanga, kuthethwa loo mabala asezimpikweni”, wachaza uSibi.

“Asobe sifumane amathambo kodwa?” wakrokra uBhaku.

“Kudla ngokuba njalo xa emaninzi, loo nto ayaziwa”, watsho uXhonti.

Amana ukuhlala ngamanye ke, lithi lisithi vu libe selitakataka lisiya chashini, liwabhule ngeempiko lawo ebekade elapho, agoqe ebaleka. Onke la selesitya osoloko ebalcka xa kukho elifikayo. Ekubonakala ukuba ngumthetho into yokuba malikhe

lishenxelwe lizanelise ngento etyiwayo nalo. Lixhole ke ngomlomo lize nenyama, lihlehle liye kuhlalela kudana.

UTawuse noBhaku noMthendevu baye kuhlala kwindawo eyodwa besakudinwa kukuma ngeenyawo. Kuze inkwenkwe kaKholisile kubo ivela ngakokwayo. UTawuse uyibuze into eyoyiswayo kukho umntu nexhalanga.

“Koyiswa ixhalanga”, yachaza.

“Kodwa wena usoyiswa nje ngamaxhalanga?”

“Ndingubani mna ukuba ndingoyiswa ziintaka!”

“Nditsho kuba usemncinane”.

“Uyaphazama. Thina bantu sisebenzisa amacebo xa sisilwa nezi zinto zisemhlabeni. Ukuba besingenamacebo iinkomo ezi ngezingavumi ukulawulwa sithi. Niyazibona nani zinkulu kunathi, umntu zingambulala ngephanyazo xa zifuna”.

“Sincede ke uye kusindululela laa maxhalanga aphaya ehashini”, wayicela uTawuse. “Singayi nje kulo sixinwe ngawo”.

“Niya kundinika ntoni ndisakuwasusa?” yabuza inkwenkwe.

“Akukabikho zinto sinazo okwangoku. Uya kuze uthi mhla waya ehlathini sikubambele inyamakazi ekushiyayo”, wenjenjalo uTawuse.

“Andifuni nokuyiva loo nto uyithethayo. Aningeze nithi beningasafuni kusibambela inyamakazi nise phakathi kwethu niye kusibambela senizihlalela nedwa”.

“Inja inceda umntu oyincedayo. Wenzani ingathi akuqondi, Bonani?”

“Ndiza kumilungiselela ke”, yatsho inkwenkwe.

Iye enkangeni, yakha olona swazi ilubonayo ukuba lude. Yaluxhuzula kwakathathu lwaqhawuka. Zifune ukubaleka izinja zicinga ukuthi fanel’ukuba iza kubetha zona ngalo.

“Ningafumane nixhale nina, andizi kunenza nto”, yatsho ilugulula amagqabi.

Ithe yakugqiba yakha yaluva ubunzima balo.

“Lukhaphu-khaphu”, yatsho, “kwaye lomile. Le nto ndiza kuyenza ifuna uswazi olumanzi olugobayo, kodwa ndiza kulinga nangolu”. Izibizile izinja ihamba ngokukhawuleza ngokungathi ifuna inyama nayo. Abanye abantu bathi besakucelwa into bayithathe ngamandla nomonde. Yayiseyide yangathi inomsindo le nkwenkwe nasenkangelekweni.

“Usitsalela kuKholisile”, wasebezela ogxa bakhe uMthendevu.

“Yeka wena ukuba uncozo njongo siya kusuke sijike xa sisecaleni

lezindlu singadange sibe ngaphambi kwazo. UKholisile angafuna ukusibetha xa esibona sisedwa”.

Uye kutsho nazo emthonjeni owawungakowabo uBonani Lo mthombo amanzi awo ayengafumane atshe nje nokuba sekubalele kakhulu. Ungene ezindongeni nentonga awayeyiphethe, wemba umhlaba omanzi wawuwisela phantsi emanzini. Uthe wakuphela kwavela udongwe olubomvu. Walukha lwaluninzi.

“Uza kwenzani ngolu dongwe?” wambuza uMthendevu.

“Musani ukungxama nina niza kuyibona”, yatsho inkwenkwe.

Iluthabathile yaya kulubetha ematyeni izama ukuba ludibane. Yabheka emaxhalangeni isakuqonda ukuba luyile nto ibifuna lube yiyo. Bahambe phambili ngoku oMthendevu kanti babe-semva xa kwakusiyiwa emthonjeni.

“Kufanele ukuba akusekho nto inje ngenyama phaya”, waqikelela uTawuse.

“Jintaka ziphanga kangangokuba kungathi kubetha intlazana zibe sezigqibe ihashe?” wabuza uBhaku.

“Andisenathemba konke, sendobona ngoko xa siyifumana”.

Inkwenkwe ilubeke phantsi udongwe lwayo ngasezinjeni. Yacuntsula intwana ngesandla sasekhohlo yayibumba kakuhle, yaza yayifaka encamini yoswazi. Yaqala ke yatsawula. Akazanga ahle emke amaxhalanga kuba yakha yawaphosa ixesha elide. Yakhalazela ukungangqinelani koswazi nengalo yayo. Yathi isakuchana lalinye aphapha onke emka. Yanguwashiywa izinja ukuya chashini. Zafika inyama isekho, zatya. Zathi zisakudikwa ezithanda ukuhleza zazikhangelela amathambo eziwaziyo. Nenkwenkwe yakha yaya kujonga, yabe yahamba indlela yayo. Wayibulela uBhaku phofu kucaca ukuba akasenaxesha kakuhle, ingqondo yakhe isenyameni. Iphelile inyama njenganto zonke ezityiwayo. UTawuse uthabathe amathambo amabini wawabeka ecaleni.

“Sisethubeni lokuba sihambe ngoku”, watsho, “ilanga selithambekile, masizame ukucutha umhlaba”.

“Siza kulala phakathi chlathini kwanamhlanje nokuba siza kukhe sibe ngaphandle kude kube ngomso?” wabuza uBhaku.

“Benisithi masithini nina?”

“Masingene namhlanje”, wenjenjalo uMthendevu. “Siza kufika kusesemini phaya. Bekunokuba nzima xa besinokufika sekuhlwile singayazi nendawo esingabheka kuyo”.

“Ezi njana zincinane siya kuzithini zisakudinwa?” wafuna ukuqonda uXhonti.

“Siya kuzibeka emqolo sixelise iimfene zibeleke abantwana bazo”, watsho uBhaku.

“Ngawantoni loo mathambo asecaleni lakho, Tawuse?” wabuza uBkelentloko.

“Ngumphako wam lo endiya kuwutya ngomso ehlathini”, waxela uTawuse.

“Ubungatsho siziphathele nje nathi kutheni?”

“Anizi kukhunjuza ndim ngezisu zenu”.

Uthe akutsho izinja ezininzi zaya kuzithabathela amathambo. Phofu ezinye azizange ziwakhathalele. Ikho into yokuthiinja isakuhlutha yinto ingacingi ukuba ingaze iphinde iyingqwenele kwixesha elizayo. Usukile uXhonti wathi cwishi ehamba yedwa.

“Uyaphi?” wamkhwaza uTawuse.

“Ndiya ehlathini”, waxela uXhonti. “Andiyithandi mna le nto kube kuthethwa into engapheliyo. Eli xesha sithethayo apha ngesekukudala siye kuwela emlanjeni, ibe xa ndihamba indlela ndinga ndingasuke ndide ndiye kufika apho ndiya khona”.

“Khawubuye”, wambiza uTawuse. “Akunakulunga ukuba sihambe ngokuhamba ngokungathi sixabene”.

NoBambisela ngoku nabo babesebewayekile amathambo nangona kwakungekho ndawo baya kuyo. Babengenawo nomncinane umnqweno wokumka noTawuse, kuba ngamanye amaxeshainja le wena ikhe ibe nehlombe xa kusenziwa into ifunc ukulinganisa.

“Sisanishiya ke ngoku, kwaye ndiyaqonda ukuba asisoze sifumane sinibone nje”, wabhekisa koSibi uTawuse. “Kodwa xa ndithetha inyaniso imbi into enisenze yona”.

“Eyiphi ngoku?” wabuza uSibi.

“Niyazibona ukuba cizi zinja zizimisele ukuya kuhlala nathi zezaseNjica. Asizazi. Kodwa sathi sisakuthi makufudukwe azaba safuna ukuhlala nabantu. Ingqondo yenu yokungafuni ukwahlukana nabantu icacisa ukuba anizithembanga ukuba ningaze niziphilele ngamandla eninawo. Isizathu esibangela ukuba uKholisile angasiva xa sithetha naye nini. Uthi nokuba sihambile akanamsebenzi nathi, kuba zikhona izinja eziza kumkhonkothela”.

Yangena le ntetho ezindlebeni zikaSibi. Nja ingazanga iyinanzengambisela. Yena umthetho wakhe wayengakwazi

ukuzikisa ukucinga njengezinye izinja awayezelwe nazo. Izinto ezaziphambili engqondweni kuye yayikukukhonkotha nokutya. Zihambile izinja ezifudukayo. Indlela yazo yayiza kubetha emva kwelali ababefudula behlala kuyo oMthendevu. Baphuma abantu baseNtakana bathi chasi phandle bezibukele. Abantwana babe-hleka ngokungathi kumnandi kubo kuba zishiya amakhaya abo. Izinja nazo zazingathi zonwabile, kodwa zisazi ngaphakathi ukuba zimka ngentlungu.

“Ukuba ilizwe alifanga kungaba kukabini”, itshilo inkosi kaBhaku xa zisukela umzi wayo. “Kwaye xa ndikhangele umzi kanja awuzimisele ukubuya ngomva kwinto obuyithetha”.

Yayithetha ibhekisa kumntu owaye kwangowelali.

Wenze umkhulungwane uSibi sel'engakowabo. Wayejonge kweli cala lalinezinja ezifudukayo. Uye kuye uKholisile wafika wathi makawuyeke. Abantu bonke bawuthiyile umkhulungwane, kuba bathi uvakala kakubi ezindlebeni. Izinja zona zixela isizungu ngawo. OTawuse bawuva kuba babengekabi kude kwaKholisile. Kubekho indoda ekhwazayo seziza kudlula kwimizi yokugqibela.

“Uyathetha?” wasabela uXhonti.

“Hayi ndibiza uTawuse”, yacacisa yatsho.

“Yintoni kuye?” wabuza uMthendevu.

“Kukho into ebendifuna ukukhe ndiyiqonde kuye”.

“Besikade silapha nje ixesha eli lonke lo mntu ubesiyekele ni?” wacaphuka uTawuse.

“Akasazi ukuba singxamile, kaloku yena usemzini wakhe”, watsho uBhaku.

UTawuse ucele uMthendevu noBhaku ukuba bamkhaphc baye kuye. Wathi izinja ababehamba nazo mazibalinde.

“Nilumke ningabethwa nguloo mntu”, watsho uBecele-ntloko.

“Akanakusenza nto, asimxhalelanga”, waxela uTawuse.

“Hayi, Tawuse, bendifuna ukwazi apho niya khona”, itshilo le ndoda yayibabizile.

“Uza kwenzani ngendawo esiya kuyo?” walumka uTawuse.

“Ndibuzo nje kuba le nto ingumntu ikholwa kukuyazi indawo enezihlobo zayo”, yahambisa yatsho.

“Ngobani izihlobo zakho?”

“Nini”.

“Abantu baqale nini ukuvana nezinja?”

“Kudala. Nangoku mna kule nquleqhu yenu nabantu bendi-soloko ndimi ngakuni”.

“Kutheni ungazanga ukhe uvele nje xa sixambulisa nabo sikhalela amalungelo ethu? Ubuvelana nathi ngentli-ziyo?”

“Kanti ndihlala ndithule ngabom ndiyiqonda yona into le beniyenza ukuba ifanelekile. Akukho mini cyodwa enakha naphazama ngayo, njengokuba bendimana ndiniva nixoxa nje. Intw’ekhoyo ndingumntu ongenabuciko bakuthetha. Yoze ithi into ndiyibona ukuba ayihambi kakuhle ndiyiyeke”.

“Ziphi ezakho izinja?” wabuza uTawuse.

“Nanziya zihamba nani”, yazalatha endleleni indoda.

“Zikushiyelani?” wayicothozisa uTawuse.

“Ndazibona sezingasabuyi. Ngabana zazithe zabeka izikhalazo zazo kum ngendandizilungiselele kuzo zonke izinto czizi-funayo”.

“Uyasiqhatha, mntundini”.

“Andiqhuli xa nditshoyo. Mna ndikholwa kukuba isilwanyana esindisebenzelayo sihluthe sitebe. Ndiza kuziyeka kodwa ngoku sezisimka nje. Ndisafuna ukuqonda ukuba ziya kuhamba zihambe zithini na ekugqibeleni”.

“Nawe ukwanjengoKholisile”, watsho uTawuse. “Ndiya kuva nje apha entethweni yakho”.

“Tawuse! Masihambe!!” wamqhuba uMthendevu.

“Kusalungile ke”, watsho uTawuse endodeni.

Wayengadanga ayixelele apho basingise khona kanye. Nayo yayise iyilibele into ayabe ibabizele yona. Uye umntu lo athi ebecinga ukubuza umbuzo aqabuke seyinguye ophendulayo kusakunaba intetho.

“Ekubonakala ukuba niya kulalisa empela-zwe namhlanje, hi?” yatsho indoda seyizinikele umva izinja.

“Sendide ndanenkantsi ngoku”, wazibika uBekelentloko besakufika kuye oBhaku.

“Akunakuthini. Usuke uthi usakuhlala phantsi ubuhamba indlela uvelelwe zizinto ezininzi, ibe yodwa imikhinkqi, utyhafe yonke le nto”, watsho uXhonti.

“Nitheth’ukuba ukusuka apha kufutshane kunento okungayenzayo emizimbeni?” wabuza uBhaku.

“Nje ukuba uhambe okanye ubaleke nokuba ngumganyana omfutshane ibakhona into cvakalayo”.

Zithe zisakuyishiya ilali yaseNtakana izinja zaya kufika emlanjeni. Zawela ezibukweni zahlala kwinx'engaphesheya. Zakha zasela ezinxaniweyo.

"Abangelwa yini ukuba amanzi la abemdaka imvula xa isandula ukuna?" wabuza uBhaku.

"Njengokuba isina nje imvula, amanzi la ayo akhukhulisa umhlaba aye kuwufaka emlanjeni. Angacwengi ke. Kanti naxa sel'esemlanjeni ayawuyaluzelisa umhlaba kuba ahamba ngamandla", wamchazela njalo uBekelentloko.

UXhonti uye elunxwemeni, waza wathi nkxu umsila wakhe emanzini, waya koBekelentloko uvuza, wafika wabatshiza ngawo. "Xhonti ukuthanda ukudlala ngokungathi uyinjana", wangxola uBekelentloko.

Ube sel'etsibela enye injana uXhonti cyikrwempa, naleyo into eyenza ngokudlala. Zithe saa apha izinja, phofu zabuya zahlanganisana zingabizwanga. UBekelentloko ucinge ngeemini awayekade ezingela ngazo kulo mlambo, wabuza kuXhonti ukuba wakha waya na kwindawo ophuma kuyo.

"Hayi, andizanga ndiye", walandula uXhonti. "Kodwa ngomnye umnyaka ndajika sendikufuphi. Asizontaba ukuba nde apho".

"Uneminyaka emingaphi uzingela?"

"Ukuba ayikho sixhenxeni isesibhozwi".

"Lide elo xesha", wancoma uBekelentloko.

"Ndikhe ndive abantu xa bethetha besithi wawubaleka oko wawuselula", watsho uMthendevu.

"Ndandingafumane ndishiywe nje yinyamakazi", wazixela uXhonti.

Zisukile apho izinja zenyuca. Kubekho inqilo eliza kuzo. Lakhala phambi kwazo.

"Abantu bathi loo ntaka ixela ithamsanqa", wachaza uXhonti. "Ke asazi ukuba ithetha ni na apha kuthi".

"Nakuthi ixela lona", watsho uTawuse.

"Ingaba lithamsanqa lantoni esiza kulifumana, Xhonti?" wambuza uBhaku.

"Mhlawumbi intlalo yethu iza kuba ntle kule ndawo intsha siya kuyo. Nditsho mna", wenjenjalo uXhonti.

Zavuya izinja akutsho. Ziyalithanda ithamsanqa xa zihambe indlela. Nomntu phofu unjalo. Kuthiwa nokudibana nje nomntu amaziyo yinto enkulu leyo kuye, nokuba akasazukumenzela

nto. Njengokuba izinja izizilwanyana ezithanda ukusukelana neentaka nje zayiyeka leyo, zisithi zinokuba zigxotha itamsanqa lazo.

“Abantu aba babeqonda ngani ukuba xa into ethile isenza oku noku ithetha ukuthi?” wafuna ukuqonda uMthendevu.

“Andazi nam”, waphendula uXhonti.

Ihambe nazo ke iintaka zada zaya kutsho embambeni yehlathi. Ihlathi eli zazijonge ukuhlala kulo lalikude kwilali yaseNjica neyaseNtakana. Zaziliqhelile ezindala kuba kwakube ngavela mnyaka ziye kufika kulo. Imithi yalo yayixinene, imide. Kodwa yayikho nemifutshane esakhulayo. Umhlaba wawuthambile kulo usenziwa ngamagqabi emithi avuthulukela phantsi. Athi ke esakuwa abunc, abole. Enze into ibe ngathi kukho umgquba ke ngoku. Kwakukhathaza ukusoloko kufumile, ngenxa yento yokuba ilanga lalingenakho ukuwugqatsa umhlaba lisithwa yimithi. Phakathi kulo kwakukho amawa. Ngezantsi kwawo ingumfulana owawunkcenkceza amanzi. Iintsunguzi zazininzi kuhamba abantu ngabantu kuzo beze kufuna izinto ngezinto. Zazintathu iilali ezazimelene nehlathi. Izilwanyana neenyamakazi zazingeganganto. Babebone zona oTawuse ukuze bacinge ukuza kuhlala apha nje. Kwaba nzima chlathini zisakungena kanye izinja zithubeleza phantsi kweziphingo, zifuna ukude ziye kufika emaweni.

“Nize nilumkele iinyoka”, watsho uXhonti. “Ukubainja ikhe yatyiwa yinyoka apha iya kufa”.

“Akunayeza ulaziyo lento etyiwe yinyoka?” wabuza uBhaku.

“Likhona eNtakana”, waphendula uXhonti.

“Ndingathi nokuba sendibaleke ndaya kulikha xa kukhoinja eyenzakeleyo ndibuye seyifile”.

“Niyazi ukuba umzimba wam sowunamanyumnyezi ngokungathi sendiyibona inyoka”, wazixela uMthendevu.

Ziwabonile amawa sezikufuphi nawo. UBekelentloko ujonge phezulu kuwo ejonga nje phofu.

“Kakade amawa la ayesenziwa ngubani?” wambuza uMthendevu.

“Andiwazi”, waphendula uBekelentloko.

“Ndihlala ndicinga ukuba ngamatye aqengqeleka kudala aza kuma ndaweninye”.

“Ukuma oku kwawo ngathi kwakusakhiwa uthango”, waqhaphela uMthendevu.

“Ibe yayizintango zantoni czi zinde kangaka?” Yayizezee-ndlovu?”

“Ewe, kunganjalo,”

“Suka, Mthendevu akukho nto iyileyo apha. Musa ukufumane uvume.”

Apha phambi kwamawa kwakukho isithuba esibanzi esingenamithi. Zahlala kuso ke izinja. Kwathi ngongcwalazi uXhonti wazenzela amabali akudala zada zalala. Yaba nguyeinja ephaphama kuqala ebusuku.

“Kanene ndilele endle”, wacinga.

Kukhale uMthendevu, wamshukumisa, wathi, “Yintoni?”

“Andiphuphi ndisukelwa nguKholisile ngomkhonto”, watsho uMthendevu.

“Ingathi ndisemzini wakhe. Andiyazi into ebesithetha ngayo saza saxabana. Le nto indikhalisayo ngoku kukuba ndibengazama ukubaleka akukho ndlela, ibe ndimbona ukuba uya esondela ngokukhawuleza eza kundihlaba”.

“Uphuphe kakubi”, watsho uXhonti.

Ekuvukeni kwazo kusasa izinja yaba yileyo yazizulela ehlathini. UBekelentloko noTawuse noMthendevu noBhaku babehamba kunye. Babona indlu awayebambela kuyo iimbila amakhwenkwe xa cyokuzingela. Amakhwenkwe ayesithi akuba sehlathini ayekunqanda iimbila apho azibhaqe khona, zize zithi ngokubaleka zifune iindawo zokuzimela zize kungena kule ndlu zicinga ukuba ngumngxuma. Azivalele ke, azibulale. Yayingenku-lwanga ingende kanjalo. UBekelentloko wamangaliswa kufumana ukuba kukho izilwanyana ezihlala kuyo. Ngaphakathi kwakuzele iimbuphu ezininzi kanti nangaphandle kwakubonakala amathambo.

“Kucaca ukuba zikhona izilwanyana ezihlala apha”, watsho uBhaku.

“Ze sikhe size apha ebusuku sizokuzikhangela. Ukuba siqondile ukuba singazoyisa siyithabathe le ndawo ibe yeyethu silale kuyo”, wacebisa uMthendevu.

“Kungalunga na xa sinokuqelalana nezinye izinja?” wabuza uBhaku.

“Ayinamsenzi loo nto. Asinakusoloko sihleli ndawonye naxa kungekho lutshaba”.

Zikhe zahlala emthini owawunqamleze phantsi phambi kwendlu leyo. Kuvakele umgqumo omkhulu, watsho kwashukuma umhlaba nayo yonke into ekuwo. Zakhangelana ukuba sisilo

sini na esi silizwi likhulu kangaka. Kwavela iingonyama ezimbini. Phofu zona zazingekaziqondi zinja. UBhaku noTawuse noMthendevu babaleka baya kungena endlwini.

“Bekelentloko! Yiza!” wambiza uMthendevu.

Wayesathalalisile uBekelentloko. Uye kungena ke naye. UBhaku wabophelela isivalo ngentambo eyayijinga apho kuso. Iingonyama ziyijikelezile indlu zisakufika kuyo, yangathi iza kusuka iwe zisakugqumela kufutshane. Zizisole sezingaphakathi izinja zathi akwaba zazingaphumanga emaweni. Yabe loo nto ingasancedi nto.

“Ndiyarana ngathi ikho inyamakazi ekhoyo apha”, itshilo enye ingonyama ngelizwi elidokodoko ekubonakala ukuba yayiyinkunzi.

“Uve ntoni na?” wabuza umlingane wayo.

“Ndiva kukho into egungquzayo. Khawuyeke ndikhangele”.

“Kutheni khona kuvaliwe nje apha kanti kuhlala kuvuliwe?”

“Bendisitsho nje!” Yazibona izinja ingonyama enelizwi elikhulu.

“Yinyamakazi ni?” yafuna ukuqonda enye.

“Ayinye, zininzi”.

“Akungebi sincedakele xa sinokufumana iinyamakazi singakhanga sibaleke”.

“Besiya kuzifumana njani ke ngokuya ubusala ukuza apha?”

“Hayi, bendingasenathemba lokuba singaze sizuze nto. Sekukudala sagqibela ukubamba inyamakazi apha. Ndinga ukuba kwakusekwindla. Iinyamakazi zeli hlathi azisezi apha kule ndlu. Nezi ndiyaqonda ukuba asizozalapha”.

Ngoku zithe zahlala ngasemnyango iingonyama.

“Kwakudinwa izinyo namhlanje kukuhlafuna”, yaxela ingonyama enelizwi elikhulu.

“Ungaqale utsho”, latsho iqabane layo.

“Siya kuthini ukuze siphume apha?” wasebeza uTawuse ngaphakathi.

“Siya kuhamba zisakumka iingonyama”, waphendula uBekelentloko.

Zazisithi zisakuya emnyango izinja zizibone zilele, zibuye umva zibengathi ziza kuzivusa. UTawuse uthe czinjeni ufuna ukuthetha nazo izilo zibayeke bahambe.

“Ziyeke”, watsho uMthendevu. “Singalala nalapha akukho sizathu”.

Axuxuzela amathumbu ezinja ukuqina kwelanga exela ukulamba. Amathemba okuba zingaze ziye emaweni ngaloo mini ayephelile kuzo.

“Ningobani na aba bahleli phambi komnyango?” wabuza uTawuse. Umbambe emlonyeni uMthendevu sel’egqibile ukuwathetha loo mazwi.

“Singokumkani beli hlathi nikulo”, yachaza ingonyama enelizwi elikhulu. “Kusckho iinyamakazi ezingasaziyo?”

“Ukuba kumkani ke kukuba njani?”

“Singabaphathi balapha”.

“Injongo yokusivalela oku iyintoni zininzi kangaka nje iindawo eningaya kuzo?”

“Silinde nina nide niphume”.

“Obu bukumkani benu nanibunikwa ngubani?”

“Sabuzuza ngokoyisa zonke ezinye izilwanyana”.

“Yithini ke ningokumkani bomhlaba ningatsho ukuba ningabehlathi”.

“Besixela nje le ndawo nikuyo”.

UMthendevu ucele uTawuse ukuba athule.

“Ingaba niyakwazi na ukukhulula intambo eqhiniweyo?” wahambisa watsho uTawuse.

“Kutheni le nto usibuza loo nto?”

“Ndibuza nje”.

“Hayi, asikwazi”.

Waqonda uTawuse ukuba kusameke kakuhle isakutsho. Isivalo sasingaqhinwanga ngentambo eyomeleleyo. Amakhwenkwe ayethabathe nje amaxolo emithi ayaluka.

“Ukuba asiphumi apha niya kuthini?” watsho uTawuse.

“Siya kuhlala apha kude kube nini”, yaphendula ingonyama.

Uziycke sekungoraty olukhulu uTawuse, wayesel’ eve ngokwaneleyo. Kwathi kanti uMthendevu lo wayemana emnqanda nje wayesel’enecebo alicingayo.

“Mna ndibona ukuba masithi xa sekusebusuku zilele sigrumbec indlu le ngemva siphume sibaleke kusakubakho isikroba”, watsho uMthendevu.

“Siya kwazi njani xa zilele?” wabuza uBhaku.

“Siya kuqikelela nje ukuba zilele”.

Ezinzulwini zobusuku zaqalisa ke izinja zawuphanda umhlaba. Umngxuma wawuza kuba ngaphantsi kodonga. Lona zazingafuni kuluchukumisa zisoyika ukuba lungasuke luwe. Ugrumbec

uMthendevu wada waya kuma ngamagxa emngxunyeni. Zazibalisana, ithi isakudinwa enye kungene enye. Ekuphindeneni kwakhe uMthendevu watsho watshona wonke kwasala umsila wodwa, kodwa nangoko wayengekagqobhozeli ngaphandle. Into eyaba mbi kukuphelelwa kwazo ngamandla. Emva koMthendevu kwathathisa uBhaku owabetha ngamandla kangangokuba zada zamqanda ezinye zathi makenze kancinane.

Wacoselela ke kwada kwavela ukukhanya. Wazixelela izinja ukuba umngxuma uphumele. Zaya kuzibonela ngokwazo nazo.

“Khawuqhwaye, Bhaku ubhekise phambili”, wamcela uTawuse.

Into cyanxakayo uBhaku kukubuyela komhlaba ngaphakathi. Wawukhupha kodwa wada waba uyaphela. Yazivuyisa le nto yalo mngxuma nangona zingazanga zithethe.

“Ngubaniinja eza kuphuma tanci?” wabuza uMthendevu.

“Masingalibazisi”.

“Asindim”, wazilandula uTawuse ebhekela kude apha emngxunyeni.

“Akukho nja ibekhe yathi nguwe”, watsho uBhaku.

“Makuphume wena, Bekelentloko”, wamnyumba uTawuse.

“Ngokuba kutheni?” wabuza uBekelentloko.

“Wena umdala, ufanele ukuba usikhokele xa kukho into esingayiqondiyo”.

“Niya kuncama ukuba ningathi nizalwa izolo eli nizame ukuqhatha mna”.

“Nini abamelwe kukukhusela mna, kuba nina niselula nisenamandla. Ndisengangani mna ndandingavumi ukuba izinja ezingaphambili kum zirecwe nto. Zazinjalo zonke izinja ezazizintanga zam. Ngoku ixesha lelenu, anifuni kulandela ekhondweni lethu. Into eniyijongileyo kuba kufe thina kuqala. Kodwa ndiyaqonda ukuba le nto niyithethayo niyithethiswa kukuba ningazalwa ndim. Ukuba beninoSibi apha beningazukutsho ukuba mayibe nguye phambili”.

“Uza kusala wedwa apha ke Bekelentloko”, wenjenjalo uMthendevu. Uzuzo kusihlangula sisakubanjwa ziingonyama”.

Wayethetha nje eqonda ukuba akanakuzo abancede. Uye emngxunyeni uMthendevu wafika wathubeleza waya kutsho ngaphandle. UBhaku noTawuse abakhawulezanga bamlandela befuna ukuva into eza kwenzeka, kanti naye akazanga abalinde esithi iingonyama zingafika esemile. Ontanga bakhe baphuma

bengasamboni. Nakubo indlela yaba ntle. UBekelentloko waphuma mgqibeli, waya kufohleka emithini ngenxa yobutyhuthutyhuthu, kwaza kwakho ingxolo eyenziwa ngamasebe. Zavuka iingonyama zajikela emva kwendlu. Zambona esaphinziza kufutshane, zamsukela. Wabaleka gqitha engasabalekeli zingqondweni. Ukhwele emthini, kwaza kwaqhuzuka isebe sel'ephezulu waya kubetheka phantsi wazifisa.

8

Yagquma ingonyama ephambili xa imalunga naye. Ngethamsanqa zidlule zombini kuye zilahlekwe ngumkhondo. Mhlawumbi zazisezisiva owoTawuse singazi. Uthe nca phantsi uBekelentloko efuna zikhe zibe kude. Wabuya wesuka wabaleka, wathabatha ndlela yimbi engasazi nalapho aya khona. Uzivile iingonyama zisitsho kude. Wema efuna ukuqonda indawo le akuyo. Ube ngazama ukuya kufika emaweni akabi nakho. Ngangovalo awayenalo wayesothuswa nazizikhondo zemithi. Kwakukhe kuvuke nenyamakazi phambi kwakhe ibaleke naye abaleke.

“Into eya kundilungela kukuba ndikhangele indawo endingalala kuyo kude kuse khon’ukuze ndiyibone indlela”, wacinga.

“Ndiya kusuka ndizibone sendigaxeleka ezingonyameni ukuba ndiya kube ndihamba emnyameni”.

Wahlala ngasemthini omkhulu. Wathi kusakuba kusile wabhaka emaweni ke. UBhaku noTawuse wafika sebelapho. Inja eyafika mva nguMthendevu. Zabalisa apho izinto ezazisenzeka ngobusuku.

“Akukho nyamakazi nikhe nayibamba izolo, Xhonti?” wabuza uMthendevu.

“Hayi”, walandula uXhonti. “Nathi ngokwethu silele singatyanga”.

“Besesinethemba njengokuba ningabuyi nje sisithi niza kuza nento”.

Kubekho impunzi ebaleke yeza kuma phambi kwamawa. Mhlawumbi yayisiza kwindawo eyiqhelileyo. Zayijoka izinja. Iye kungena ezindongeni ezinde icinga ukuba izinja azinakungena apho. Zonke izinja zema phezu kweendonga ngokungathi zazi-bhungisene. UBekelentloko uthume ezincinane ukuba ziyibambe ziyibulale. Inja engazanga ivume nguTawuse, yena efuna ukuyilalela ingaphumi ibaleke. Yakhala impunzi zisakuyibamba.

“Kumaxa nindawoni na, Mthendevu?” wabuza uTawuse ethubeni encina amehlo. Wayeyiva isitsho ngelizwi eliphantsi. Wayengayiboni nakakuhle izinja ziyisithile.

“Sekuzo kulunga”, wamchazela watsho uMthendevu. “Noko Tawuse ingathi utsha ziintambo”, watsho.

“Akukho nokungathi”, watsho uTawuse. “Singathi sikhe saphoswa yile nyamakazi sife yindlala”.

Kube kwaphuma ilizwi lisithi “Amandla angakuthi”.

“Yizani nayo kaloku”, wayibiza uBekelentloko.

Ziyiqabelisile ngaphezu kweendonga izinja zaya kuyitya.

“Ndiva kakubi kukuba ndize endle sendigugile”, wazisizela uXhonti, esitya.

“Iinto zonke zinamaxesha azo. Akungeze uzikhathaze ngenxa yokuba wawukade usebenzela oJongani”, wamxolisa uBekelentloko. “Ukukhula kwenu zazingekho ezi ngqondo zokuziphilela, zivele nezi njana.”

“Akukho nto phofu nokuba sesiza kufa thina. Sesivuyiswa nje kukuba izinja ziyibonile indlela”, watsho uXhonti.

“Ndinento endiyicingayo”, watsho uMthendevu. “Kufuneka ngokuhlwa khe siphume siye kuba iigusha emizini”.

Zamvumela izinja.

“Ubusithi singazifumana phi ke?” wambuza uBahku.

“Bendisithi mna masibheke kwaKholisile”.

“Nam ndikwelo lakho, Mthendevu”, watsho uTawuse.

Zikhe zaphikisana izinja, iyileyo ifuna kuyiwe kumzi eyayivela kuwo. Kaloku izinja ezi zazizazi iigusha zeendawo ezazivela kuzo ukutyeba kwazo, ke zizingwenela. Zayekela koMthendevu, kuba basuka bathi kusaza kuyiwa kuyo yonke imizi enecusha. UMthendevu waziqhuba izinja kusakuhlwa, wathi makusale iinjana ezintathu emaweni kunye noXhonti.

“Andinakho ukuba ndingahlala apha kuhanjwa”, wala uXhonti.

“UKholisile lowa wandisebenzisa gqitha engekabikho uSibi. Ndifuna ukuba kukhe kubekho into endiyifumana sisulu kuye”.

“Uya kuthini ke xa kuza abantu?” wazama ukuqonda uBekelentloko.

“Uya kukwazi na ukubaleka njengathi?”

“Nokuba bandifumene bandibulala akunani, sendigugile kakade”, wenjenjalo uXhonti.

“Hayi, ke xa ungasuni kuhlala asinakukunyanzela. Thina ngokwethu besiba siyakubonelela kuba umdala”.

“Phofu wena ndinayo ingqondo ethi umntu akanako ukundizuza nokuba ndingaka”.

Neenjana zathi azinakusala, zisoyika ukuba zodwa zona.

“Mna ndithi kufanelekile ukuba uXhonti lo makahambe”, watsho uTawuse. “Nanjengena enamava kulungile ukuba asoloko ephakathi kwethu”.

Izinja azizanga ziphume ngexesha ezazilicinga, kuba zakha zalibala kukuthetha. Zive abantu ababetha amakhwelo sezisephelweni sehlati.

“Abo bantu ngahle bakhangele thina”, wakrokra uBhaku.

“Babe bacinga ukuba bangasibona njani kuhlwile nje?” wabuza uMthendevu.

UBekelentloko uziyalele ukuba ziye kumlinda ngaphandle kwehlati izinja. Yena wachwechwa esondela ebantwini. Akuva kugawulwa waqonda ukuba inokuba ngabantu abaze kufuna amahlahla.

“Ze nigawule nigawule nindishiyele nam imithi leyo”, wakhwaza edlala phofu.

Waya kuzifumana izinja sezingqengqile ngaphandle kwehlati.

“Singaya kufika kwaKholisile sibuye ngethuba xa siselapha?” wathandabuza uTawuse.

“Akukabikho busuku noko”, waqonda uBhaku.

“Masingabi saya kwaKholisile”, watsho uBekelentloko. “Kuyanqeneka ukuhamba. Masikhangele imizi encegusha kule ikufutshane nehlati”.

“Indawana eya kuba mbi yile yokuba asiyazi le mizi”, watsho uMthendevu, “kanti kuleya yaseNtakana besiya kusuke singqale czintangweni singalahleki. Apha sinokuya nasendlwini sisithi

sisibaya, sibethwe ke ngabantu. Anditsho kodwa ukuba maku-ngayiwa”.

Zihambile zaya kutsho ngasezintangweni kumzi osengingqini. Ngelishwa izinja zalo mzi zakhonkotha zingekade zibe nandlela yakufumana gusha. Zemka.

“Zingathini ezi zinja sizokubela abantu zibe zona zisithintela?” wamangaliswa uTawuse.

“Xa kunjé siza kubheka phi?” wabuza uMthendevu.

“Siza kuphindela ehlathini kungekho gusha siyibhaqileyo”, waphawula uBhaku. “Zonke izinja zizakwenza le nto”.

Ezo zaziziphazamisile zazisakhonkotha kodwa zingade zize kuzo.

“Inene niya kufela apho ningazange nive bumnandi emhlabeni”, waziqalekisa uTawuse.

“Hayi, musa ukukhwaza ebusuku apha, Tawuse!” wamqanda uBekelentloko. “Yona ntoni loo nto?”

“Uza kuvusa abantu beléle”.

Ngoku ziye kuma ngezantsi komzi ongentla kwalo zaziqale kuwo. Zacinga ngendlela ezinokuya kungena ngayo, zingasafuni ukufumane zizibhakaxé nje.

“Lo mzi ingathi mkhulu”, waqaphela uBhaku. “Ibe izityebi ziyathanda ukugcina izinja ezininzi”.

“Siya kubona phambili. Bathi abantu xa bathethayo ‘isiziba siviwa ngodondolo’” wamomeleza uMthendevu.

Umzi wawubonakala ngethunzi emnyameni ubukhulu bawo. UBekelentloko ucebise ukuba mabangaveli ngasemoyeni kuba esithi banokuviwa besekude zizinja zawo.

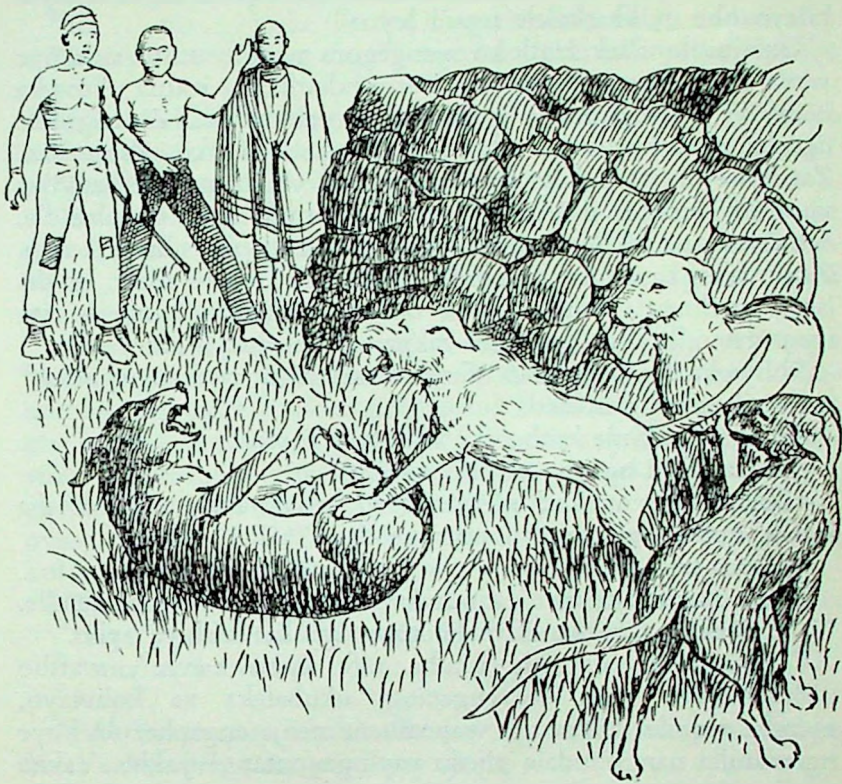
“Khanime”, wemisa uTawuse. “Siza kuqhuba luhlobo luni? Iza kuba “yileyoinja izibambele eyayo igusha?”

“Bendibona njalo mna”, watsho uBhaku.

“Makubiwe igusha ibenye”, wenjenjalo uBekelentloko. “Ziya kusixaka xa zininzi”.

Zide zayakufika ecaleni leentango zingabonwanga nto. Uthe xa uBhaku eza kuvela phezu kwamatye kwancwina iinkomo zisetyisa. Zaqonda ke ukuba bobenkomo obu, esibaya sona soba sesiya sithe qeke phaya apha abuhlanti. UBekelentloko ubaleke waya kuncathama kuso, zaza nezinye izinja zamlandela nganyé.

UBekelentloko wathi, “kuza kungena mna esibayeni. Ukuba igusha endithe ndayibamba ibe lula ndiya kuqabela nayo nga-



phezulu, kanti ukuba indisindile ndiya kuyinikela nina”.

Zanqwala lizinja ngeentloko zicacisa ukuba ziyaqonda. Zazibonana kakuhle, uCandubusuku enze kwakhanya. Wakhwela ke uBekelentloko phezu kwamatye. Akujonga wafika iigusha zithe gwaqa zilele. Zazigqibe isibaya sonke. Wafikelwa yingcinga ethi: kazi ndiya kubamba etyebileyo na? Uthingazile apho umzuzwana. Isazela sikho nasezinjeni xa ziza kuthabatha into ezingayinikwanga. Kuthe kanti noXhonti unazo iingcinga zika-Bekelentloko, wambamba enqineni wathi,

“Uze ukhangele enokuthi ityebe”.

“Akanakuba nalo clo xesha emzini womntu apha”, waxela uBahku. “Myeke uza kumlibazisa side sibhaqwe. Yigusha etyebileyo obe uyikhathalele ngani leyo?”

Uzizimisile uBekelentloko njengegora watsho umtsi wamnye waya kuwa phezu kwegusha. Yathi ixhathalaza izama ukuvuka wabe sel’ eyimokomele ingenandlela yakubaleka. Zidungukile iigusha zaya kucukana ndawonye zisakubona oko. Zangqisha. Zazibona ukuba kukho igusha ebanjwe yinja, into ke ezoyikisayo. Uyifunqule uBekelentloko waphumela nayo ngaphandle. Kwakungona zikhonkothayo izinja zomzi ekwakubiwa kuwo. Zaxhwakra kancinane ezasendle zisithi ziza kubuye zilale. Igusha isake yaxhuzula ikhala izama ukuphuncula. Izothusile le nto izinja zasendle kangokuba zakha zafuna ukubaleka.

“Niya kuthini ngoku ukufuna ukundishiya ndedwa negusha?” uzibuzile uBekelentloko.

“Ungayilahli nje kutheni?” wabuza uTawuse.

“Anisayifuni nganto na nina ngoku?”

Ukhawuleze wajika uMthendevu waya kuye. Yamkhaba igusha emlonyeni watsho wamumatha. “MH!” watsho.

“Nceda undityathise apha”, wamcela uBekelentloko.

Izinja zasekhaya ziye ezantsi kwesibaya zalwa nezi zasendle. UBekelentloko undlandlathcke nayo igusha ezishiya apho.

“Ningahlehli, nixolele ukuba nife kube kanye”, watsho uMthendevu. Yena wayengacingi ukubaleka xa kulilwayo, nokuba wonile. UTawuse wayedibene nenja engaphezulu kuye ngamandla nangobudala phofu yayingeyontanga yakhe. Yakha yambamba yambetha phantsi, wavuka egxadazela. Ingxolo ezayenzayo yabangela ukuba kude kuvuke namadoda eze kukhangela ukuba kwenzeka ni na. Kaloku izinja zizinto ezithi ukuba ziyalwa zifundekele kakhulu. Amadoda ayekrokrela ukuthi zinokuba zibambe imfene, isilwanyana esikholisa ukutyelela emizini ngobusuku. Afumene izizinja zodwa ezilwayo, kwaye engazazi apho zivela khona ezinye ezi.

“Kungakhange kuxhelwe nje kuya kuthini ukuba kubekho izinja ezingezizo ezalapha ekhaya, apho ngendisithi ezi zingezozakuthi zize kuchola amathambo?” wamangaliswa umninikhaya.

“Mhlawumbi bezize nje kwezakuthi kwaza kwaxatyanwa”, baqashela abafana.

Bazilamle bezibiza ngamagama azo ezabo. Yayisel’ ingu-

mbodamo apho bengayazi neyona iyeyakokwabo. Ezasendle zibheke ehlathini zisakwahlulwa. Bazibuzile abantu ezabo ukuba zilwela ni na, zakhala ngegusha emkileyo.

"Im . . . im . . . imke nantoni?" wathintitha ebuza umninimzi.

"Ithatyathwe yenyeinja", zaxela. "Sisilwa nje seyihambe nayo".

"Nenze kakubi ngokungayisukeli", wazigxeka. "Nisuke nalibala zizinja ezingenagusha".

"Inokuba ayikabikho kude", zatshe izinja.

"Tsa-a-a-a!" afunza amadoda. Aphuma kwicala ezaziphume kulo ezo zasendle ehamba nezawo, kodwa akakhe atsho ukuzibona. Endaweni yokuya ngasehlathini asuka agudla imizi esithi ingaba zezelali le yawo.

Afuna ezingqaqeni nasezingeni kwada kwakusasa. Ayecinga ukuba angabhaqa nokuba lixhwayelo. Athi akungafumani mkhondo emizini egqitha ekhangela ukuba akanakubona zinja zixhapha gazi na. Azabikho. Ukubuyela kwawo ekhaya kwakungona afuna ingcombolo ezinjeni zawo. Wayesoloko ekhuza into engaphela ndawo umninimzi, kucacile ukuba wenzakhe ngokwenyani, nangona wayenemfuyo eninzi. Kuthiwa isityebi asifumi kulahlekelwa nayintwana.

"Ezi zinja bezilapha nikhe nizibone?" waqondisisa kwezakhe.

"Hayi", zalandula. "Besinokude sizazi xa bekusemini".

"Aniboni ebusuku?"

"Hayi".

"Aba bantu niye nibakhonkothe emnyameni nilapha ekhaya, bona behambela kude nibabona njani?"

"Sukube kukho umthinzi. Kanti nokuba seside saya kuye umntu asikwazi kwahlula ukuba ngubani na".

"Iziphunzi nezihlahla ningazikhonkothi nje zona ziyimithinzi kutheni?"

"Zimile. Umntu uyacaca kuba uyashukuma. Naye phofu ukhe egqithe singamqondanga okanye sothuke sel' elapha njengezi zinja bezilapha".

"Ukususela namhlanje ze nikhonkothe konke okushukumayo, nokumileyo" wazinika lo myalelo umninimzi.

"Njengokuba isihlahla singazi kugqitha nje uthetha ukuba zesikhonkothe de kuse?" zabuza izinja.

"Ewe, kuba zikhona izinto ezinoburalarume eziza kuncathama kuso".

“Ingaba asoze zive buthongo”.

“Ningasuka nilale emini xa amasela engekezi kuba”.

Amadoda akhe aya esibayeni, aqwalasela ezigusheni. Afumalisa kukho inkabi engekho.

“Yile gusha kanye bendiba ndiya kuyixhela ebusika kusakukhithika le inkileyo”, watsho umninimzi. “Umlhlole onje uyayala ukwenzeka. Izinja bezifudula ziyityela phaya endle igusha zingade zize kuyirola esibayeni. Siza kuma kakubi xa singazi kuba nandawo yokugcina impahla yethu. lintango besicinga ukuba yeyona ndawo yokuyikhusela”.

Ngoku babesathetha abantu ababelahlekelwe, izinja zasendle zazihleli ekungeneni kwehlathi. Igusha zaziyelele kwangokuhlwa. Into eyayibangele ukuba zingayi emaweni kukoyika ukuba zingadibana namaramnawa azoyisayo, ayihluthe ke. Inja ayithandi kuphulukana nento sel'iyiphethe nokuba iyibile na. Iye ibaleke nayo ngoku umniniyo selesithi mayiyibeke. Zithe ke makube kho izinja ezihamba phambili zijonge into enokuthi ibe sisithintelo endleleni yazo. Igusha yaphathwa nguTawuse noMthendevu bebambisene ngayo. Bathi besakudinwa banika ezinye izinja. Zayitya ke inyama yaphela ngaxesha linye. Zancoma ubumnandi bayo. Kukho ezada zathi zitya nesikhumba. Naso zasifumana sinamafutha esinawo kungafani nokuhlala.

“Izinja ezikule mizi besikuyo ziza kusikhathaza”, watsho uBekelentloko ebambe ithambo ngentupha.

“Ndiyayibona loo nto. Maziyekwe zihlale phaya. Asiyi kubanalo ixesha lokusoloko sigaya. Ukugaya oku kunzima. Unyamezela iintetho ezibuhlungu kwezi zinja uhamba udibana nazo”, loo mazwi aphuma kuTawuse.

“Azi ukuba baphi na oBambisela nenkosi yabo?” watsho uBhaku.

“Ubacinga ngani bethu?” wambuza uBekelentloko.

“Ndibakhunjuzwa zezi zinja sithetha ngazo”.

“Bonwabile neenkosi zabo czo”, waxela uTawuse.

“Uya kuze athini bethu uKholisile mhla sangena kwakhe?” wamangaliswa uBekelentloko.

UMthendevu uvele wahlabela ingoma esenziwa kukuchwayita. Yayisithi: “Ingwe sayibamba sayiyeka, nantso ibaleka, yileqeni!” zabe sezimlandela ezinye izinja. Ngoku ziyeke namathambo ezazihleza zeza kuye zakha isangqa. Zaxhentsa. Zazimi ngemilenze yangasemva zimana ukuwisa kunye ngentloko.

Zazizekelela ukombela kwazo. “Vi-i-i-i-tyi! Vi-i-i-i-tyi!” wantyontya ikhwelo uXhonti cthabatha uswazi aza kumisa ngalo. “Nivela kude zinjandini. Nayishiya imizi yabantu kuba ningekabuyeli kuyo kunanamhla. Nifancelwe kukuba nikhululeke kuloo ndawo nikuyo, kuba ilikhaya lenu. Sizwe esikhuthuleyo kuba sithanda intlutha. Ningabambi ingwe yodwa khon’ukuze nilungelwe. Ningafa mhla naya cNtakana naseNjica”.

Wazibonga wenjenjalo izinja uXhonti. Zaziva zingathi zingenza nezinto ezingenakuze zizenze.

“Yileqeni!” zazingisa. Zazibonakala kwasebusweni apha ukuba zicinge kude. Zibe zihlala zisakudinwa phofu sezikhe zavuma nezinye iingoma ezizaziyo.

“Ukholisile yena oko kwakhe ndingamgqitha ngokuxhentsa”, waqonda uBhaku.

“Akukho nto ayaziyo lowo ngaphandle kokubethainja”, watsho uMthendevu. “Us’ke abe lutiniko ngokungathi umzimba lo wakhe awunamalungu”.

Izinja yazichewula into yokuba. Zazisiya emizini yonke imihla zingenamini injani. Zathi zisakuqonda ukuba ziza kude zibanjwe kwimizi ekufutshane nehlathi, zayiyecka. Zagquqisa kwilali ezazivela kuzo ade amadoda alala phakathi ezibayeni. UKholisile yena zamphumela iphulo. Njengokuba oMthendevu babelile kakuhle nje endle, oBambisela babengonwabanga. Babephethwe kakubi kanye ngaba bantu babesithi abanakwahlukana nabo. Inkosi kaBhaku yakha yaya kukhalazela uKholisile ngokugcina izinja yona namanye amadoda aseNtakana bengenazo.

“Into yezinja ezilapha kum yeyam, mmelwane”, watsho uKholisile kuyo.

“Mandikuxelele ngokuphandle. Ngoku nifuna ukuba kufanwe ngenkani. Mmelwane! musa ukudibana nabantu belali nithi mandigxotho oSibi bengenatyala. Banceda kuyo yomibini le mizi imelene nam. Ndikhe ndiphulaphule ebusuku xa bexoxa, baqale ngentla kuJongani, ndibeve ukuba nabo besiya ngakwakhlo, batsho kube kudala apho, kube kodwa ukukhe ngathi bayabamba. Andithethi nto ungayaziyo. Naphantsi kwale meko sikuyo ubungamelwe kuza kum uthi mandibagxotho, ngenxa yokuba banokusibikela xa bebona amasela lawa asendle. Ungabokuvuma ukuba abantu bathi xa benento abazungula ukuyibhekisa kum bathumele wena. Akuyonkwenkwana yabo yona ingasoloko isenza into abayicingileyo. Nangaphezu koko baza

kusixabanisa. Ifike ibe nibi ke into yokungevani kwethu simelene, kuba asinakuze sinnedane”.

“Ndiyayqonda Mmelwane,” yatsho inkosi kaBhaku. “Mfondini khawundiphe icuba nditshaye”, yancaza ngoku kwintanga yayo.

“Andazi nokuba uya kulunga na kweli cuba, libi”, watsho uKholisile.

“Andinalo nelo linjalo. Ndigqibele izolo ukukhe nditshaye. Inggondo le isuke yangathi iphungulekile kukunqanqatheka”.

“Kanene wena akutyi nesixhaxha! Thina sisuke sithi sisakuphelelwa licuba siphande inqawa”.

“Sandoyisa, kwaye andiqondi ukuba ndingaze ndibe salunga kuso”.

“Ubuve phi namhlanje utywala, Mmelwane?” ubuzile uKholisile enika inkosi kaBhaku ingxawa.

“Ingaba ndiyaxoka”, yatsho inkosi kaBhaku. “Andikhanga ndibuve konke”.

“Busanqabile noko. Asizanga sihlale ixesha elide kangaka singaseli”.

Yabe yahamba ke inkosi kaBhaku. Kungentsuku ngaphi emva kwale mini, uKholisile nenkosi kaBhaku bebethethisana ngezinja. uBambisela wakhonkotha umntu owayejikela ezantsi komzi wakowabo. Wayeqhele ukwenjenjalo kuye wonke umntu ambona egqitha. Lo mntu umbethe ngentonga wamsukela waya kumfaka kowabo enze isithonga sisinye.

“Izinja zilungisa ukuhlala nje, nina nilibele ngamathambo apha”, wayemana ukutsho.

Uphume ngokwakhe uKholisile akuva isikhalo. UBambisela waya kuzimela ngaye. Wayesel’ esopha.

“Yintoni? Uyibulalalaniinja yam?” wabuza emntwini uKholisile.

“Iyandikhonkotha ndizihambela”, wachaza umntu.

“Asiyiyo loo nto”, watsho uKholisile. “Ubuhleli uyizonda kakade le njana. Kudala yakukhonkotha kodwa akuzanga uyiqhokre ngolu hlobo”.

“Ndihlala ndiyiyeka nje ndingakufuni ukutyiwa yinja”.

“Wena ufuna ukuba ezakho izinja zibakhonkotha abantu, kodwa wena ungakhonkothwa. Sisini eso?”

“Nangoko ndandisenczinja mna ezam zazingandwa,” watsho umhambi.

“Kungokunjalo nakwezi, nto nje amakhwenkwe makube akazivanga”.

“Aya kuze aphume umntu sel’imlimazile, kuba ibukhali, ifuna esiqwini ngokukhawuleza”.

“Uyabona, mhla uya kuze uphinde ubetheinja yam, ndiya kuze ndilwe nawe kakubi”, watsho uKholisile. “Andiqhuli. Mandingazungelezwa ngochuku”.

Indoda le yayiyeyale lali yaseNtakana, umzi wayo wawukude kodwa kulo kaKholisile.

“Kube ngasa hawu! hawu! hawu!! Tyhini!! Siya kuhamba phi?” yatsho xa ishiya inkundla.

“Bambisela! abantu abasanithandi oko kwathi kwemka izinja apha emizini”, wamhlebelala uKholisile. “Andazi nokuba aniyiqondi na loo nto ukuba injalo. Mna akukho nenye into enokundisithela engqondweni. Bamonela mna kuba ndisenezinja endinazo. Ibe ngaphandle kokuzibonela eku tanezinto abakhe bazithethe ngani. Ke, ningaze niphinde nikhenkothe mntu nokuba kusebusuku. Naxa nithe naziyela endle, njengoko nikhe nenze, ningabuyi niye kubo kuba banokusuka banibethe. Ndiyabazi abantu balapha banochuku. Ndikhula nabo. Bayandiqhwaya nje ukuba ndicaphuke. Kanti ke abanakundifeza ndisakuya kule ndawo bandiqhubela kuyo. Laa mntu ebelapha ebngamelwe kukubetha naxa sowude waphambi kwezindlu zakowenu. Kwaye ndiqinisekile ebeza kukubulala ukuba bendingekho. Kodwa ukuba bendithathe intonga nam ndambetha bekuza kuthiwa ndikhohlakele, ingachukunyiswa le ebeyenza yena”.

Wagcuma kakhulu uBambisele ziintlungu, nomzimba wakhe wadumba. Wayehlala ndawonye nokutya ekuziselwa. UKholisile wasoloko emnonophele, emqaba amanxeba ngamayeza, wada waphila. Izinja zasendle zona yaba nje into eyaphantse ukuzimisa kakubi. Zathi ruthu zanomkhwa wokutya iimfene neenkawu. Izilwanyana ziqabuke sezingasababoni abahlobo bazo zingazi ukuthi bayephi na. Zibakhangele kuphel’iintsuku ezininzi zisuke zidinwe. Kweenzeka ngenye imini ukuba izinja zibambe imfene zisithi ihamba yodwa. Zazibona ezinye iimfene zaya zibaleka kuzo ziqhaq hazelisa amazinyo. Zayiyeka izinja.

“Nini kanti aba basibulalayo?” zabuza iimfene.

“Hayi asizanga sibulale mfene thina”, wakhanyela uBhaku. “Nale besiyibambile besiyibuka nje kungekho nto siza kuyenza ngayo”.

“Xa niyibuka niyitsalela ni?”

“Isuke ayeza siyibiza”.

“Nisidele gqitha noko ukuba singathi sakungezi kuni nisi-tsale ngenkani”, zatshe iimfene. “Nizele ukuza kuphatha thina kakubi apha?” Zemka.

Banexhala ngoku oBhaku neqela ababehamba nalo. Babheka emaweni befuna zithi ukuba ngaba ziyabuya zizokulwa babe sebephakathi kwezinja. Basoloko behleli phambi kwamawa ke bejonge ukuza kwazo. Kwathi kanti iimfene zisaye kuqokelela izilwanyana neenyamakazi zehlathi, zaya nazo kwindawo ezazidla ngokubona kuyo izinja. Yayizingonyama zodwa ezazingekho kuzo. Izinja zaphawula ukuba ikhona into eza kuhla.

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“S ifuna ukuba nisixelele ukuba zenze ntoni na izilwanyana zehlathi nizizingela nje?” sibuze satsho isithethi seemfene ezinjani.

Intswahla ibenkulu ezinyamakazini kubonakala ukuba sezino-
msindo.

“Makuphendule wena Mthendevu”, wenjenjalo uXhonti, esiza kuhlala phambi kwezilwanyana.

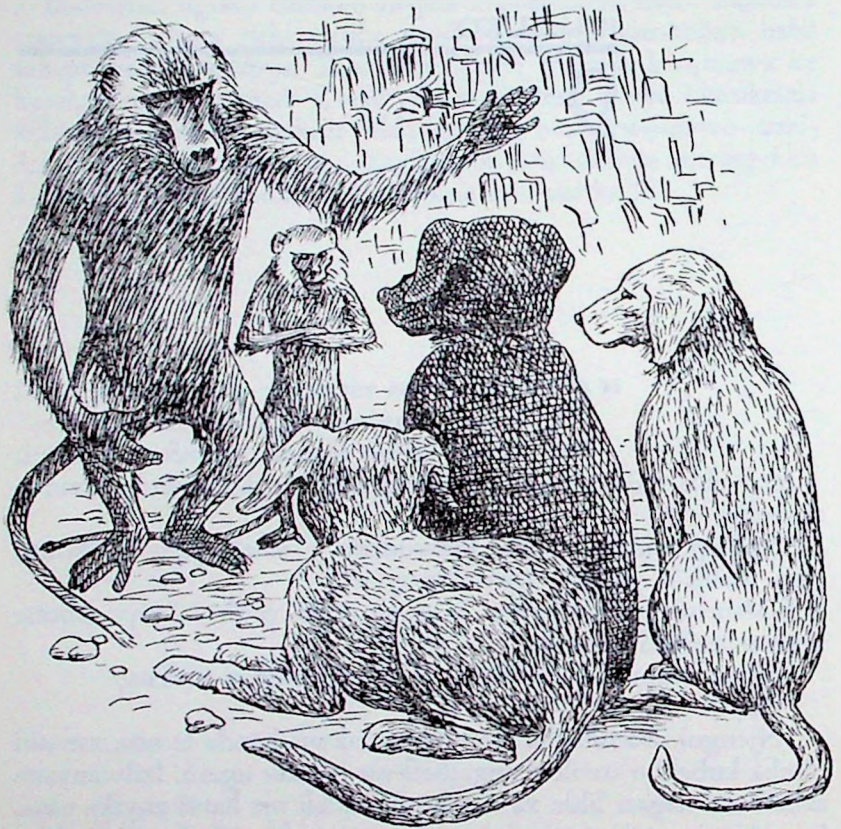
UMthendevu wathetha engcangcazela wathi: “Siye sibone abantu bezibetha bezitya”.

“Ningabantu kaloku nina?” yamngcambazisa imfene.

“Hayi”.

“Njengokuba nilapha nje ndifuna ukunichazela le nto, zamani ukuba kubekho uxolo kungathethwa kakubi ngani. Izilwanyana azinakuba nagazi lihle xa zinokuthi zihleli nje kanti zoyika nina. Ingozi eniyenzileyo ngoku nikhoyo inkulu. Ukuba niza nala ngqondo yabantu yokucinga ukuba inyamkazi yinto yokufakwa eziko, niya kumka ningathandanga apha. Asinoyiki thina zimfene. Ningaboni ukuba siye singathethi xa sidibana nani. Noku kuthi sibaleke xa abantu besifunza ngani, sukuba sisoyika bona. Nabo phofu siyaboyisa xa sithe sazinikela emlweni. Musani ukufuna ukondlana ngathi”.

“Nantsiya kanye laa nja yakha yandileqa imini yonke”, itshilo into kaSokhetye, izisula futhi. Yayixela uTawuse ke.



“Le nkawu iyandityhola, andizanga ndiyibone nasenkungwini”, waxela uTawuse.

“Ikukhetha ngani wena wedwa phakathi kwezinja ezilapha?” yafuna ukwazi imfene.

“Tlhettha nje. Yayindiqonde ngani, kuba into eleqayo iba ngasemva, ize eleqwayo ibe phambili?”

“Inokuba yakuqwalasela usakuyiyeka okanye usaya kuyo”.

“Andikhumbuli nakancinane ndisenza into enjalo,” watsho uTawuse.

“Nokuba yayingenguwe ke, kodwa ikhonainja cyakha yayisukela le nkawu. Endingazi ukuba yayiyenzela ni na loo nto. Kwazi yona”.

Phofu ngokwenene uTawuse waklia wanenkawu ayisukelayo, kodwa ngokubona ukuba uza kuba sengozini wathi makangavumi.

“Ningabi sakhathazeka zilo zehlathi”, wacela uxolo uMthendevu.

“Sithe ngokungaqheli intlalo le sikuyo ngoku sabhideka. Besingathandi noko ukuba nikhathazwe sithi, kuba semka ngesikhalo nathi emizini. Nditsho ndisithi ke, akukho silwanyana nanyamakazi iya kuphinda ityiwe sithi zinja. Ndiyayincoma into yokuba sithi sisakwenza into engalindilekanga nengalungile, nithethe ngemilomo yenu ningasuke nilwe. Nisibonisile izimo zenu zihle. Singavuya xa ninokuza kusinqanda njalo apho sithe saphosisa khona, ningadinwa. Nathi phofu siza kuzibona ngokwethu izinto esingamelwe ukuba sizenze, kuba sibadala”.

“Xa nifuna indlela eninokuhlala ngayo apha dibanani nezilwanyana ziya kunichazela”, yatsho imfene. “Thina asizibulali izilwanyana nokuba zincinane na kuthi. Asilolishwa into yobuncinane bazo. Onomatse aba nabo bayafuna ukutya ubomi nje ngathi. Ningabe nizingele nantoni na apha”.

“Uthethe ukuthi ke neentaka siziyeke?” watsho uXhonti.

“Ngaphandle kwazo. Andinakuthethelela into endingazalani nayo”, yaxela imfene.

“Xainja ikhanuka inyama ingathini ukuze iyifumane?” wabuza uMthendevu.

“Impungutye itya inyama yonke imihla. Ayizanga izikhathaze izilwanyana chlala nazo. Ningakhe nidibane nayo ngalo ndawo. Ndiyathemba ukuba iyakuminika awona macebo aphili-leyo”.

“Nina zimfene nitya ntoni?”

“Sitya imithi yehlathi neengcambu ezithile”.

“Apha emaweni kwakulala thina” ivele yatsho imbila, “ngoku asisezi oko kwathi kwafika nina. Beningenandawo yimbi niingayikhangelayo nihlale kuyo?”

“Siyanicela, zilwanyana, ukuba nise niyiyekela kuthi le.

“Niyalazi ihlathi. Sikhe sinibone ningena emingxumycu esi-malengalengeni apho singenakuya thina. Loo nto ithetha ukuthi aninakuswela ndawo”.

“Kulungile”, yavuma imbila.

“Enkosi!” wabulela uMthendevu.

“Siza kuhamba zinja,” yaxela imfene. “Sobuye sibonane”.

“Besikholwa ukuzazi amagama azo izilwanyana ezi zilapha”, wanqwena uBhaku. “Siyaphikisana xa sidibana nazo. Enyeinja ithi yinto ethile leya, enye ithi asiyyo”.

“Abantu bebenganixeleli na xa nizingelayo?” yafuna ukwazi imfene.

“Ewe, bebesichazela, kodwa zininzi esingazaziyo, nesiingazanga sizibone”, watsho uBhaku.

Imfene ithe izinja mazihambe phakathi kwezilwanyana zizibuze. Kwathethwa ke apho yinto yonke.

“Kutheni le nto nasoloko nikrozile xa nisiya kusela emlanjeni?” utshilo uBhaku kwinkawu awayencokola nayo.

“Senzela ukuba kuthi ukuba ngaba kukho ingozi ngaphambili kwenzakale inkawu ibenye zisinde ezinye”, yachaza inkawu.

“Undincamisile!”

“Elo cebo zaba nalo kudala iinkawu singekazi nokuba siya kuze sizalwe thina”.

“Le iphambili ayikoyiki ukufa?”

“Iyakoyika, kodwa ayinakunceda kuba iyanyanzelwa ngumthetho”.

“Phofu ke niyalinga ukuyisindisa xa niyibona isenzakala, nokuba niyabaleka?”

“Siyazama xa siqonda ukuba singanako, kungenjalo siyishiye”.

“Iimpunzi ezi zenziwa yintoni ukuba ziye kusela ngaxesha nye?”

“Mhlawumbi zicinga ukuba amanzi anokusuke agqitywe yimpunzi efike kuqala”, yaqashela inkawu.

“Neenkomo zikwanjalo. Kodwa ndiyaqonda ukuba zenziwa ngamakhwenkwe alusayo. Aqhuba imihlambi ayise emlanjeni. Engaselanga ngoko alapho inkomo ayinakube izuze thuba limbi”.

“Nina niwuziwuzelani umsila lo xa niza kuma benibaleka?” yabuza nayo inkawu.

“Siphelisa amendu sizokuma kakuhle, msinya”, wayichazela uBhaku. Kubekho umoyana obethayo bavuleka uboya benkawu.

“Uboya benu kanti buyephuyephu!” watsho uBhaku.

“Ewe! Ubungabazi?”

“Hayi!”

Uyishiyile uBhaku inkawu waya kwezinye izilwanyana. UTawuse wayigxeka indlela athethe ngayo uMthendevu sezizo-dwa izinja.

“Ngabe nditheni?” wabuza uMthendevu.

“Ubungafanelanga kuthi ezilwanyaneni siza kuziyeka singazizingeli”, watsho uTawuse.

“Ubuthulele ntoni ungandinqandi xa ubona ukuba ndiyaphazama, ubukho nje nawe?”

“Kus’ke kwathiwa mayibe nguwe ophendulayo”.

“Ngokuya wena ubuthetha ubuthethelani?”

“Bendiqhawula nje indawana cbijongene nam”.

“Usengayayo nangoku ezilwanyaneni uthi kuzo akunakungazizingeli”.

“Ungevi uTawuse lo, Mthendevu”, watsho uBhaku. “Siyazi thina ukuba ithi into isakudlula kuqale kuvele ubuciko obuninzi”.

“Iza kusifumana ke ngoku indlala”, waqonda uTawuse. Uye kuhlala yedwa ematyeeni angentla kwamawa, wabukela iimfene zidlala emithini. Zazijinga emasebeni, zisuke zitsibele kwamanye zingakhanga ziwe phantsi. Kwakukho nezazikhwela emithini zibalekile, zithi zisakufika encotsheni zibe zihle.

“Ingaba zonwatyiswe yile nto sithe asizukuzenza nto bethu?” wafuna engqondweni uTawuse. Kuze iinkawu ngakuye, zema zifuna ukukhe zithethe naye.

“Ukhangeleka lusizana, ulambile na?” yatsho eliqhawa.

Akakhe atsho ukuvula umlomo uTawuse. Zahamba iinkawu zisakubona ukuba akathandi kuba angathetha nazo.

“Kucacile ukuba izinja ezi zikhohlakele”, yatsho enye inkawu.

“Zingathini ukuthi besiqqiba kuhleka nazo ngoku, sizibone seziqumbile? Azinakulungelana nathi. Thina sikhulwa zizilwanyana ezisoloko zikhululekile”.

UTawuse uhambe emva kwazo ckhangelela ukuba ziza kuthini na. Ziyokutsho ezimfeneni, zadlala apho nazo. Waphethuka engadanga wayakufika kuzo uTawuse. Izinja zaqonda ukuba uTawuse lo angaze azibizcle utshaba, zaza zathi ’ze zithi ukuba zithe zabuya izilwanyana kwakhona zizalathise yena zithi nguye owenza inkathazo. Zazithetha esiva, zixube nokumoyikisa.

Yazinqabela ke izinja inyama, kwisithuba saschlathini. Zazingayiqhelanga kakade ngaphambili. Kodwa zazisazibawela iinyamakazi. Zazisithi zisakusondela kuzo zime zizijongisise ngokungathi ziyaqala ukuzibona. Inja sisilwanyana esithandayo ukuphindela kwindawo esasivela kuyo. UTawuse noBhaku noMthendevu bakha basuka chlathini besiya kwilizwe lokuzalwa kwabo. Babengazasisanga izinja ngaloo nto. Nangona babesiya eNtakana, babengazi ukuthi injani na inkangeleko yayo xa kusemini. Babamanzi ngumbethe besandula ukulishiya nje ihlathi. Ingca yayikhulile yaba nde kulo lonke ilizwe. Iinkomo zazivele ngemiqolo kuyo. Kwimihlobo eyayikho yayingumgcele nomsingizane. Yabahambisa kakubi ke betyiwa zizangethe, ibakhinkxa enye into. Kodwa babetha kuyo inde injalo, kuba babe ngenakwenza ngakumbi. Besakuba kude ngasemva benyuka endulini baya kuthi khebevu ngaphezulu bajonga imizi namaxawuka ebabefudula bekuwo. Zawa iinyembezi besakufikelwa ziinkumbulo zeemini ezadlulayo.

“Nakuya kwaKholisile kuqhuma umsi”, wachaza uBhaku.

“Yini, ndingakhe ndimbone loo Kholisile”, watsho uTawuse.

“Uza kumenzani?” wabuza uMthendevu.

“Ndingwenela ukumbona nje ndikhangele ukuba angathini na”, “Ungas’ke uthethe ngoSibi nje kube kanye ’ze ndikuve!”

“Ndiyathanda ukukhe ndidibane notshaba lwam ndazi nendlela oluqhuba ngayo”.

Behlile apho endulini baya kujikela ngezantsi kwelali leyo yaseNtakana. Bahlala entilini eyayikufuphi nentsimi kaKholisile. Umzi wakhe babewubona kakuhle kuba wawusethambekeni. Owawungavelanga wonke ngulo wawungowakuloBhaku, nangona wona wawusecaleni lazo. Kuvele uSibi besafanisa abantu kwaKolisile.

“Khawuze ngapha”, watsho uMthendevu emi ngeenyawo.

Wamangaliswa unina ukuba zizinja zaphi na ezi zimbizayo.

“Tyhini! Nini kanti aba!!” wakhuya esakuqonda.

“Ewe, sithi”, watsho uTawuse.

“Bendingalindele ukuba ndingaze ndibuye ndimibhaqe apha”.

“Ubesel’asincama”, nguTawuse ke lowo ubhekisa kuBhaku.

USibi ngangendlela awayevuya ngayo wayethetha yonke into.

“Bendikula masimi ases’apha”, wachaza, “Kwafumana kwakho into ethi mandiphume ngokukhawuleza kanti koko ndiza kubona nina”.

“Usakuthand’ukujikeleza ezintilini nasezigxeni?” wambuza uMthendevu.

“Andisoze nditshitshe”.

“Nifancele ukuba niyahlutha xa kukho imigidi”.

“Uthini na ngoku, Mthendevu?” watsho uTawuse. “Ama-thambo la angahluthisa izinja?”

“Ndithi mhlawumbi abantu banokuzibuka izinja ezimbalwa ezikhoyo, baziphe kwizinto abazityayo”.

“Hayi, Mthendevu, sisatya okuya kutya nikwaziyo nani”.

“Nibangaphi izinja ezikhoyo apha eNtakana?” kusabuza uMthendevu.

“Isendim noBambisela. Phofu ziseza kubakho izinja apha elalini xa ndiqonda. Izolo ndibone iinjana ezimbini kulo mzi wawukade ungowakulo Bhaku”.

“Akukhange uthethe nazo?”

“Zibekwe phi xa uvayo?”

Zisencinane, azikakwazi ukuthetha”.

“Abantu bangaqokelela zonke izinja ezisemhlabeni kodwa azinakufika kuthi ngokukhalipha nokusebenza”, watsho uBhaku.

“Thina sisesemizini sasingalindeli ukude sithunye xa sibona into isonakala. Ndixela ke singeka xabani nabantu”.

“Amakhwenkwe akwaKholisile asaphilile, Ma?” wabuza uTawuse.

“Ewe, bethu asahleli”.

“Abantu baza kuzingela ngani nonyaka nje?” wafuna ukuqonda uBhaku, “kuba nezi njana zimbini uthi zikho azinaku-kwazi ukubamba inyamakazi”.

“Baya kufumane bahambe nazo ukwenzela ukuba bangabi bodwa”.

“Baza kuthi mazifundiswe nini ukulanda. ‘Ze ningavumi”.

Kwakubonakala nje mhlophe ukuba uBhaku akayithandi le nto yeenjana eziselalini eyayiyeyabo. Inja idla ngokuthi ngoku seliyishiyile indawo ingafuni ukuba kubekho enye engena esikhundleni sayo. UMthendevu ubuze ixesha aza kulunga ngalo umbona.

“Sel’uza kuvuthwa”, wamchazela unina. “Lo usemasimini useza kuqale adubule wonke phambi kokuba atyiwe”.

Ngeli xesha uMthendevu asela uSibi inyongo, uBhaku no-Tawuse baphulaphule ngomdla.

“Elona xesha limnandi apha emnyakeni liliphi?” isekwangu-Mthendevu lowo utshoyo.

“Kusekwindla nasebusika”, waxela unina.

“Kumnandi ebantwini bodwa?”

Kwinto yonke. Iinkomo neegusha ziyahlutha”.

“Zitya ntoni iinkomo?”

Zitya ingca eluhlaza ekwindla kuze kuthi kusakuba sebusika zifumane iindiza”.

“Kubi ukuba zizo”.

“Kaloku zadalelwa ingca. Ayizidiki”.

“Umbona azilungi kuwo?”

“Ziyalunga koko azinandlela yakumzuza”.

“Izinja ezi azinakho ukuyitya ingca kakade?”

“Hayi”.

“Zenziwa yintoni?”

“Iyazigabhisa”.

“Ma! Sizimisele ukuhle sihambe sibheke ehlathini”, waxela uTawuse.

“Kulungile! Ndiya kukhe ndilale ubuthongo obumnandi namhlanje ndikhe ndanibona”.

“Siya kuba njalo nathi ngokwethu”.

“Ma! Noko uyaguga”, waphawula uMthendevu.

“Ndifancle njana yam sekuntsuku ndikho emhlabeni”, watsho uSibi.

“Uphume amathambo emzimbeni apha. Kodwa kum ingathi ngowungekabi nje ukuba ibingasiyiyo into yokuba abantu beziphethe kakubi izinja!”

“Bendiya kwaluphala kakade kusakufika ilixa lam nokuba besendihleli kakuhle”.

“Wazalwa nini?”

“Ndazalwa ngendlala. Kuthiwa kwakungalinywanga ngabantu ngaloo mnyaka. Izinja ke zazisifa, kodwa ndaza ndasinda mna ngenxa yokunyaneyekelwa yinkosi yam. Into eyayinayo ngokwancleyo yayilubisi, indipha njalo, ingafuni ukuba ndife”.

“Inokuba yayisalungile ngoko”.

“Nangoku isenjengoko yayinjalo kudala. Into engayithandiyo kukoniwa. Nani ayizanga inibethe ngaphandle kwesizathu”.

“Untanga ni kuXhonti?”

“UXhonti asingowanamhlanje, Mthendevu. Ndibe nengqondo sel’ekho kakade”.

“Kwenziwa yini ukuba izinja zihlale ixeshana elifutshane, ziguge, baze abantu batye ubomi obude besebatsha?”

“Andazi”.

“UKholisile lo wayenenja ukukhula kwakho?”

“Yaza kubakho sendikweli xabiso lenu”.

“Yaza yathini?”

“Yalahleka. Ndiyaqonda ukuba yadibana nabantu esithubeni bayithabatha. Ndandedwa ke ukuba kude kuzokuzalwa nina nje”.

“Usale kakuhle ke”, zabalisa iinjana.

“Ningabokuyeka ukuza apha”, watsho uSibi.

“Uze ungamazisi uBambisela ukuba ukhe wasibona”, wamyala uBhaku.

“Yoo! Iinjana zam azisenkulu!” wancoma uSibi xa sel'emganyana.

“Masingene apha emasimini sijonge umbona. Kungenzeka nina ukuba uMa lo uyasiqhatla sel’ulungile”, watsho uMthendevu.

IO

Ziye kuma emvikweni wentsimi kaKholisile izinja zasendle, zakhangela ukuba akukho mntu uzibonayo na. Zaxhaka udiza olunentshaka, zaxakeka. Zazingayazi nendawo esivela kuyo isikhwebu. Kwakungekho nempontshane le eyayinokuzenza ziqonde. Zifune ukukhe zive ukuba intshatshoba injani na incasa yayo. Zayixhumela kunzima ukuya kufika kuyo. Zigqushe kwakudala apho zingenacebo.

“Khawunyathele udiza olu, Tawuse, ukhangele ukuba aluzukwaphuka na”, wamcela uMthendevu.

Akalibazisa uTawuse. Nqokro! lwaphuka kanye elungwini ngasesikhondweni.

“Akuvanga nto ke!” watsho uTawuse.

“Ingaba yile ndawo iphuma umbona le, Bhaku?” wabuza uMthendevu, ephathaphatha intshaka.

“Ndikrokrela ukuthi yiyo”, waphendula uBhaku, “kuba naku kukho izinto ezifana ncenkozo kuyo”.

“UMa ubenyanisile xa ebesithi akakavuthwa. Siza kuluthini olu diza?”

“Masilushiye apha, aluzukwenza nto”.

“Baya kuthini abantu besakulubona?”

“Siya kube sisehlathini ukuza kwabo apha”.

Uluthabathile uTawuse walugxumeka ecaleni lesikhondo salo.

Ngekwenjenjalo ngekuba wayezama ukugquka umkhondo. Zanenkolo ethi luza kumila kwakhona. Kodwa kukho into ezayilibalayo—iinyawo zazo. Zaziyeke zinjalo, ibe zazicacile, kuba umhlaba wawumanzi.

“Ichumile le ntsimi”, watsho uBhaku beyishiya.

“Ifanele ukuba nje umniniyo ukukhuthalele ukulima”, watsho uMthendevu.

Wathi akuya kuhlola emasimini uKholisile wawubona umonakalo owenziwe zizinja. Udiza ezazilwaphule lwaluse lushwencile. Walubamba waluncothula. Wafumanisa iziinyawo zodwa ngakulo. Inggondo yakhe yamnika into ethi ngoTawuse ababelapho. Yayingabo kakade ababesoloko bemhlupha. Into awayengayazi kukuba zaziphi na iingqondo zabo ngokwaphula umbona wakhe. Walandela umzila wezinja kodwa wabuya wamlahleka. Kwakucacile khona ukuba ubheka kwicala elingasehlathini. Esakugoduka wafika uSibi noBambisela bekho ngekhaya, kodwa bengahlalanga kunye.

“Baphi na oMthendevu, Bambisela?” wabuza.

“Andibazi”, watsho uBambisela.

“Ndifuna undixelele inyaniso nja yam”, lwanyala uKholisile. “Ndiyakwazi uthembekile ngaphezu kukaSibi, kwaye uyeyona nja ndiyithanda gqitha. OMthendevu aba bathi babeye kwenza ntoni emasimini?”

“Nini ke?”

“Ngalaa mini babeye ngayo”.

“Andizanga ndibabone ibe nokuba ndandibabonile babeno-kundifihlela into abayokuyenza. Uyazi nawe, nkosi, ukuba bemka singasevisisani”.

“USibi akakhanga akhe athethe ngabo kuwe ezintsukwini apha?”

“Hayi”.

“Xa ucinga wena uthi uSibi lo angakuncokolela ngabo xa edibene nabo?”

“Andazi”.

“Mhla uya kuze ubabone ke ubokuze ubaleke uze kundixelela. Uthi ukuba andikho uxecelele umfazi wam nokuba ngamakhwenkwe. Kanti ubokuthi xa ulapha ekhaya umane ukujonga phaya emasimini. Ungabokuzixhamla ngokuya kubo wena. Bangasuka bakwenze into obungayilindelanga”.

“Abayi ngobusuku kodwa?”

“Endingazi ke inene. Phofu unganyanisa, kuba yonke impahla yethu ithatyathwa ngobusuku. Bambisela! ndingathi ukuba ndikhe ndaphinda ndafumana izinja ezinje ngoTawuse abaya, ndazi ukuba ilishwa lam likhulu emhlabeni. Ungabokuphika nokuba singakhali sithwale izandla entloko, igalelo labo linamandla. Bakhe babe ngathi bemkile okwethutyana, bathi ukubuya kwabo bebe ezityetyisiweyo zona iinkabi zeegusha. Ndiyaqonda ukuba baya kuthi besakugqiba baphumele ezimazini. Ndikhe ndithi nokuba ndihleli ndifune ukuba babeyicinge njani na into yokuya kuhlala endle”.

“Zingaphi iigusha abasebezithabathile?” wabuza uBambisela.

“Uthi fan’uba ndisabala wena. Ndazigqibela besaqala ukufika apha eNtakana zikumashumi amabini”.

UKholisile uthe enkwenkweni yakhe mayimphathele amanzi abemaninzi. Wayefuna ukusela. Imini le wayeye ngayo emasimini yayishushu inolophu.

“Ungaya kuzenzela izinto zakho, Bambisela”, watsho uKholisile, xa inkwenkwe isiza namanzi. Wasolula isandla iskude.

“Abanda kannandi!” watsho akukhova ukusela. “Akukudala ekhiwe, hi?”

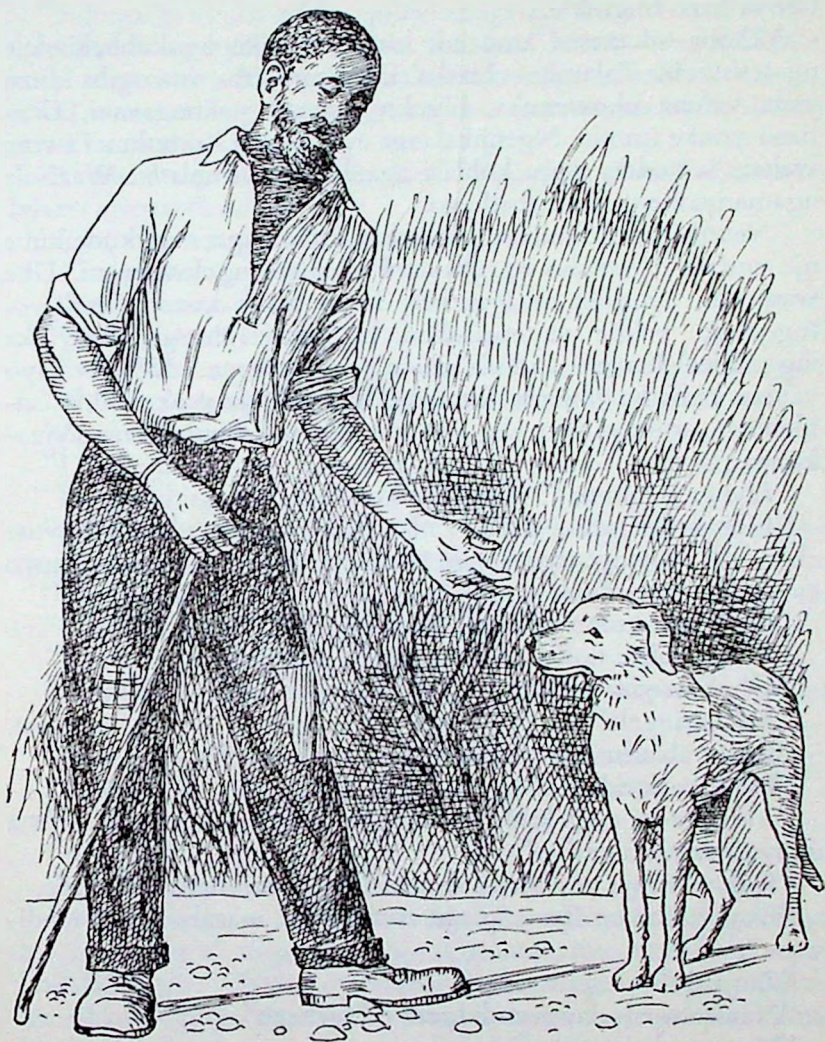
“Hayi”, yaphendula inkwenkwe.

Akukholwa ngawo wawachitha engceni aseleyo.

Ukulunga kombona izinja zaya kugrenya, eyona nto zazi-thembele ngayo zisesemizini. Yona leyo into zayifumana ilula ngohlobo lwento yokuba amasimi ekude nemizi, abantu bengasoloko bekuwo njalo. Apho zamchunga khona uKholisile kangokokuba wada waphantse ukuvuma ngaphambi kwexesha. Wayekiswa kukoyika ukuba umbona unokusuke angunde xa enokungeniswa ezindlwini okanye afakwe ezindladleni ungekomi. Umbona wakhe wawuchazekile amakhasi la. Wena wakha wayibona intsimi ebethwe sisiphango. Wakha wada wathetha yedwa genye imini wathi:

“Ukuba ndandiyiqondile into yokuba izinja zinokuba nengozi enje ngendingazigxothanga”.

Yena waycinga ukuba zizinja ezazizezakhe zodwa ezazisitya izinto zakhe, esithi czinye czazimke nazo zinokuba zizihlalele ehlatini, engazi ukuba zihamba kunye xa zisiya kuba. Ithiinja le yakubalasele ngemikhwa ibe ngathi yonke into embi yenziwayiyo. NabaseNjica abantu babekhala ngoTawuse noMthendevu nangona babengabazi ebusweni. Ebusika abantu bamqo-



kelela umbonana owayesele bamsa emakhaya. Izinto ezazinga-zanga zizitye izinja ngamathanga nemixoxozi kwanamazimba. Zazisezikhuluphele ukuvuma kwabo. Zazintle nokuba ntle, uboya bazo bugudile.

Akhona amaxesha amnandi kwinto yonke ngokubhekiselele ngasesiswini. Zalamba ebusika kangangokuba imizimba yazo yada yafuna ukuwexuka. Ngoku zanento yokungavani, zixabana yonke imihla. Ngenjikalanga eyayibanda kakhulu uTawuse wahamba yedwa waya kuhlala ngaphandle kwehlathi. Wazisola ngamanyathelo awathabathayo.

“Nakuba ndandisoloko ndikhalaza kwakungazanga kude kube nje emizini”, watsho ngaphakathi elambile ngokwenyani. Ube washenxa emithini awayesithele kuyo waya kwenye indawo. Ingqondo yakhe yayingasekho hlathini. Iphango liyayijika ingqondo. Kuvele indoda ihamba kancinane. Indlela yayo yayiza kubetha phambi kwakhe. Wanomoya wokuzifihla ezihlahleni, wabuya wayeka eqonda ukuba nakanjani na ayinakungamboni.

“Uyinja yaphi na?” umbuzile lo mfo esima.

“Ndiyeyasekuthini-thini, nkosi”, waphendula uTawuse ebiza ilali eyayingeyiyo le yase Ntakana. Wayengazanga aye kuyo eyazi nje ngegama.

“Kwakude kuloo ndawo”, yatsho indoda.

“Kuthe gelele noko”, wayingqinela uTawuse.

“Ubekwa yini ke apha?”

“Ndiyazingela”.

“Baphi abantu ophume nabo?”

“Ndihamba ndedwa”.

“Akuzizo ezi zinja kuthiwa zabaleka abantu kuba zisithi zifuna ukuya kuzimela endle?”

“Kukho izinja ezabaleka abantu na?” wazibuzisa uTawuse.

“Ewe, zikhona. Kunjalo nje ziyenza kula macala ethu xa ndivayo”.

“Zinjani?”

“Nantso nje indawo endingaze ndiyichane”.

“Hayi, andizizo, nkosi yami”.

“Ubunokutsho ukuba uyenye yazo xa ubuhlala endle nawe?”

“Bendinokuyifihlela ni loo nto?”

“Ubuza koyika ukubethwa. Abantu bayazizonda ezo zinja

ngenxa yomonakalo omkhulu eziwenzileyo empahleni yabantu. Ziyazitya”.

“Yoo! ukuba mbi kwale nto uyithethayo!” wazikhuzisa.

“Ndingathi ukuba ndikhe ndayibhaqainja ibambe igusha ndingayibulala ife nya”, yasongela indoda. “Nawe bendisithi uza kuthi ungowasendle bendiza kukufak’intonga kakuhle”.

UTawuse uzive engamanga kakuhle yakuthetha njalo. Imbi-zele kuyo indoda leyo.

“Kutheni ngathi ulambile nje?” yaqaphela ibonakalisa uvelwano ebusweni bayo.

“Ewe, nkosi, kunjalo”, wavuma uTawuse.

“Akukabambi nyamakazi?”

“Hayi”, walandula.

“Ukhe wabona nyamakazi phofu?”

“Ewe. Ndivuse umvundla kungekudala ndiphumile ekhaya”.

“Wakha wawubamba umvundla njengokuba uyinja nje?”

“Akukanye ndiyibamba”.

“Usinde njani lowo namhlanje?”

“Hayi andingekhe ndixoke undishiyile”.

“Akukangeni apha ehlathini? Yindawo abaphila kuyo abazingeli le”.

“Andinakho, ndiyoyika xa kungekho bantu”.

“Ukumka kwakho uza kubheka phi?”

“Bendicinga ukugoduka”.

“Masihambe siye ekhaya: ndiya kukunika ukutya”, watsho umntu.

UTawuse umbuze elakhe ikhaya waza walixela.

“Kunjani ke apho uvela khona?” yabuza endleleni indoda.

“Utsho ngantoni ke?”

“Iinyamakazi zininzi?”

“Ewe, nangona zingaqithisanga”.

“Azinakulingana nezalapha. Akukho nyamakazi ingekhoyo kwelaa hlathi ubungakulo. Akwakho namanye amahlathi anazo kodwa akude. Ukuba uyakuthanda ukuzingela ungancedakala xa uhlala apha. Kuzingela wonke umntu—amadoda nama-khwenkwe”.

“Uthetha ukuba usazingela nawe?”

“Sendayeka ngenxa yokugula zizitho”.

“Into ongazanga uyieke yinyama?”

“Ndingathini kaloku iyimpilo yomntu nje leyo!”

Uhambile uTawuse wada waya kuba kufutshane ekhayeni lalo mntu. Izinja zakhe zeza kuye zamjoja, zifuna nokumluma ezinye, koko inkosi yazo yazinganda. Yakuba semzini wayo indoda yathi: "Hlala apha ndisaya endlwini".

Wathi buthalala ebaleni ke. Ubuyile umninimzi sel'ephethe ukutya wathi mabaye endaweni efudumeleyo, wamnika apho watya.

"Ungubani igama lakho?" wabuza uTawuse ephanga.

"Uza kulenzani?" yatsho indoda.

"Ndifuna ze ndixele ekhaya ukuba ndikhe ndancedwa ngumntu ongubani ndilambile".

"NdinguKholekile. Wena ungubani elakho?"

"NdinguNgqoqo, nkosi".

Isizathu sokuba angathethi nyaniso yayikukunqena into ethi igama likaTawuse linokuba liyaziwa ezixekweni jikelele nje-ngoko wayengundaba-mlonyeni. Ihlekile indoda yakuva igama eli. UTawuse wayibuza imbangi yokuba ihleke.

"Ndihleka ukungangqali oku kwegama lakho", yachaza. "Kwakutheni ukuze kuthiwe unguNgqoqo umbala wakho ungenjalo?"

"Yinkosi yam cyandithiyayo, ndingazi ke ukuba yayibona ntoni na".

"Enyanisweni ikho into yokuba athi umntu esakulithanda igama athiye ngalo into engalifanelanga. Wumbi ke enziwe kungakwazi ukuthiya, kodwa efuna".

Izinja zasekhay'apha zize kuTawuse zifuna ukutya. Wazi-gxotha uKholekile.

"Yinja etheni le ivulwa ukutya yodwa?" yabuza enye kwezinye. Ukutya okwakuphiwe uTawuse kwakukuninzi. Kwaya kuphela sel'ecothisa ukutya kwakhe. Waqonda ukuba izinja zikaKholekile zihleli le ntlalo wayeyihleli naye kwaKholisile. Abantwana bakaKholekile nabo beza kujonga le nja ifikayo.

"Ingathi asiyonja ncam le", yatsho intwana eyayincinci.

"Ingathi yintoni?" wayibuza uKholekile.

"Ndixakiwe ukuba ndingathi yintoni na".

"Hayi yiyo le, mfo wam: nto nje wena wenziwa kukungayi-qheli".

"Iwabalekiselani amchlo la sakuyijonga?"

"Inokuba inecntloni".

Iintloni zantoni?"

“Kalokuinja iba nazo nayo iintloni, kungakumbi xa iphaka-
thi kwabantu engabaziyo”.

“Ifanele ukuba lisela”.

UTawuse akazithandanga izinto ezithethwa yinkwenkwe
ngaye. Ukubainja izenza into ethile engeyiyo ayifuni ukuba
ichukumyiswe le iyiyokanye. UTawuse apha wayesel'enza
ngokungathi ulilungisa, into engazange yona okoko yazalwa.

“Ngqoqo! Ndifuna ungemki apha ekhaya”, watsho uKhole-
kile. “Andinazinjanogkwaneleyo, ibe ndiyakhathazwa nga-
masela ezintwenizam”.

“Iziz'wezi nje izinja zininzi aziwabambi zinani?” watsho
uTawuse.

“Yiyeke loo nto nja yasenzini. Ayazibhida. Kusuke kuse
kukho into engekhooyo bezilele apha ekhaya”.

“Kulungile ke, nkosi ndingahlala, xa ngaba unokundondla
kakuhile”, wavuma uTawuse, “nangona ndingenakuthembisa
ukuba ndingabamba amasela ebendifike engabanjwanam”.

“Hayi, Ngqoqo, akunakuze ulambe”, wamqinisekisa uKhole-
lekile.

“Izinjazakho zitya kutya kuni?”

“Zitya zonk'into”.

IzinjaziKaKholekile zazingaphaya kweshumi ubuninzi bazo.
Yayinyeinja eyayinomzimba kuzo. Yayinamathambo ama-
khulu kwanyama.

“Izinjazakho zikhaliphile?” wabuza uTawuse.

“Utshozona? Kakhulu”, waxela uKholekile.

“Wawuzihlupheze ngantoni?”

“Ngesigcawu”.

“Zonke?”

“Zinokuba zintathu okanye zibene endazihlupheza nge-
nkuma”.

Akuyeka ukuthetha nenkosi yakhe entsha uTawuse waya
kuzihlalela yedwa. Nayo yakha yalungisa izinto ezithile phakathi
komzi wayo. UTawuse waxela le nja yayinkulu ukuba inkhapho
babheke ethafeni.

“Nokuba bendinokubuyela emzini bendingenze ndahlala kulo”,
watsho uTawuse.

“Hi?” yasabelainja awayehamba nayo.

“Hayi ndithetha ndedwa”.

Umzi kaKholekile wawumi endaweni embi esesigingqini,

engenazo nazixhobo namithi kufutshane nayo, kubonakala ingca nje qha. Wawuwodwa eminye imizi isithele kuwo. Wafuna uTawuse ukuba kwakutheni na ukuze uKholekile ayokuma edlelweni. Bagqithe ezigusheni zakhe. Amatakane azo ayeqokelelene edlala. Iigusha wafika zityebile zingafani nazinja. Ucinge kakhulu ngabahlobo bakhe awayebashiye ehlathini, wanengqondo yokumka kwangoko. Wathi kodwa makakhe ahlale apho kude kuphele nokuba ziintsuku zine. Wathetha kakhulu nenja awayehamba nayo, kodwa engafuni ukuyityhilela intlalo ayihleliyo esithi ingas'ke iye kwazisa uKholekile, enzakale ke. Wabuya ethafeni nayo belandela amakhwenkwe awayeye kunqanda iigusha. Wazibala uKholekile ukungena kwazo iigusha.

"Makwedini! ndandithe kuni impahla nibokuza nayo ilanga lisekho", watsho ecwangcwiswa imivalo. "Iya kuba nenyongo ukuba ikhe yatya ingca enombethe apha. Andazi ukuba nifuna ukude ndithini na ukuze nive. Andikholwa yile nto yokuba ndibe ndikhamisile ndingxola. Nenziwa yintoni le nto ningafuniyo ukwenzisa into eniyixelwayo?"

Uthabathe isijungqu somthi esasisesangweni wawagibisela ngaso amakhwenkwe, abaleka.

"Ndiya kunilungisa, la matshivelana!" watsho uKholekile.

UTawuse ufumene ukuba isibaya sakhe asakhiwanga ngokuqinileyo.

"Uyawuthanda lo mzi, Ngqoqo?" ubuzile uKholekile.

"Ewe, ndiyawuthanda", watsho uTawuse.

"Zonke izinja phofu ziyakholwa nguwo".

"Njengokuba ucocelela nje xa uvalayo kungokuba iigusha zingenakuya kwezi zikroba zilapha xa zifuna ukuphuma?" wafuna ukuqonda uTawuse.

"Hayi, azinakuze zityhoboze", waphendula uKholekile. "Zazi ukuba indawo yokuphuma yile yodwa. Iyaqina nje imini zilapha ukuba kuvaliwe".

UKholekile uthe uTawuse makazikhangelele indawo aza kulala kuyo. Wathi yena usaya emizini eyayingemva kwenduli.

"Kutheni kungona uya emizini ngoku sekuhlwile?" wabuza uTawuse.

"Kukho umntu endinqwenela ukuba ndidibane naye. Andinakulunga ndilale ndingambonanga. Bendifanele ukuba ndiye kuye kwakusasa, kwaza kwathi ngenxa yemicimbi ukuba mininzi akwabi njalo".

“Inkulu le lali isesapha?”

“Ewe. Nalo wam umzi usuka kuyo”.

Uhambile ke uKholekile eshiya uTawuse eselapho ngasesangweni. Ngaloo mini azizanga zonwabe izinja chlathini akungabikho uTawuse.

“Ingaba kwenzekeni kuTawuse?” wabuza uMthendevu ezinjani.

“Unokuba usazifunela into etyiwayo”, waqashela uBekele-ntloko. Zayithetha indaba yokungabikho kwakhe kwada kwasezinzulwini zobusuku. Zaphuma emaweni zaya kumfuna zingena-kulala. Tawuse wayephi! Kwakukho ezazisezinengqondo ethi ufile. UMthendevu noBhaku basinga kwaKholisile besakungamfumani chlathini. Bahlangene nabantu ababini xa besenyuka ngelali yaseNtakana.

“Asizizo czi zinja zazisuka apha kuthi czi?” warana omnye umntu. Yayiyinkosi kaBhaku endala leyo.

“Ndibona loo nto nam”, yatsho indoda eyayinayo.

O Bhaku benza ngokungathi baqabela ethafeni.

“Khanize ngapha!” yabiza inkosi kaBhaku endala.

“Size kwenzani?” wabuza uBhaku.

“Ungakhe ulinge ume, Bhaku,” wamyala uMthendevu.

“Andiqondi ukuba abantu basenento abafuna ukuyithetha nathi. Masingachithi ixesha lethu ngabo”.

“Ze kuthi kanti nizungula ukuba iigusha zethu nizula apha nje”, yakhwaza inkosi ka Bhaku endala.

“Niya kwenzani khonukuba sizibile?” watsho uBhaku.

“Nitsho?”

“Ha ha ha-a-a!” wahlekela phezulu uMthendevu.

“Kanti loo ntsinana ninayo siya kuze siyiphelise ilanga libe linye”.

“Ngesivuya ukuba niyiphelisa ngoku ningathethi ngento endala”, waxela uMthendevu.

“Kodwa mna, Mthendevu bendisithi masingabi saya kwaKholisile”, wenjenjalo uBhaku besakusithela abantu.

Wala uMthendevu ngegama elithi sebehambe kakhulu ngoko ke mabasebesiya kufika.

“Uze ukhumbule ukuba oko sathi seza apha emizini sesisuka endle asizanga sibonwe sisaya emzini. Ingathi kum namhlanje siya kudibana nengozi. Mhlawumbi nangoku abaya bantu besithetha nabo sebeye kusimemela amadoda,” ngamazwi kaBhaku ke lawo.

"Kanene wena uza kube ucikoza. Ingozi uyoyika ngokungathi wakha wenzakala", watsho uMthendevu. Ngoku uMthendevu wathi kugxa wakhe makangamphikisi kwinto ayithethayo.

"Ndiza kukuyeka ke", waxela uBhaku, "kodwa ukuba ndikhe ndabethwa apha mna ndiya kukulibeka kuwe ityala".

"Hayi, masihambe, njandini", wankaniza uMthendevu.

UBhaku lo wayebathobele oMthendevu noTawuse kangango-kuba enyeinja yayinokude icinge ukuba bayamoyisa. Kanti kwakungenjalo. Ukudalwa kwakhe wayentliziyi ethambileyo, elungile ngamazwi acacileyo. Umsindo wakhe wawusiza kade. NoMthendevu ke babengamboneleli bemntlokothisa. Baye kwindawo awayedla ngokulala kuyo uSibi. Bamvusa sel'csebuthongweni obunzulu. Wazanla.

"Ningobani?" wathetha ngelizwi elirwexayo.

"Sithi", waphendula uMthendevu. Wayengawabizi nje amagama abo wayesazi ukuba unina uza kubeva ngamazwi. Kuthiwainja ayinakuze ilahlekwe yinjana yayo nokuba sekusemnyameni. Ibakhona indawana ethi iyiqaphela ngayo nokuba incinane na.

"Tyhini! Mthendevu, nibuyile?" wafuna ukwazi unina.

"Hayi, Ma, asikabuyi", walandula.

"Nize kwenzani apha?"

"Size kukhangela uTawuse. Akabuyanga namhlanje", wachaza.

"Xa nicinga ke nina nithi uTawuse ngahle eze ebantwini ebathiyekangaka? Ebenokude ayenze loo nto xa izinja bezibuye zonke".

"Kukho nokumbona nje ngelihlo engezanga mizini".

"Hayi, andikhangandimbone".

"Ngoku siza kukhe siye kumfuna kwamanye amahlathi. Kunokwenzeka ukuba ubaleke le nto yokuba ukuzingela iinyamakazi kwavalwa kweliya sikulo".

"Nguye yedwainjaengekhoyophayakuni?"

"Ewe".

"Ukuba ukwamanye amahlathi unokuthini ukungaqhubi nokubayinja inye?"

"Nakuloo nto yaloo mahlathi sesithetha nje, asazi. Hayi, asazi".

"Ndokhe ndikhangele nam nangona ndingatsho ukuba angalapha emizini".

Kufike uBambisela wabulisa ngobubela. OMthendevu bakha banomoya wokuhamba bakumbona.

“Uya kuze uye nini chlathini, Bambisela?” wambuza uMthendevu.

“Kanti ndiyakufuna ukuza kuni”, watsho uBambisela. “Sendizisola into endandisalela yona. Ndikhe ndithi namaxa ndibheke ngasehlathini ndijonge ukuba andinakubhaqa nja ndiyaziyo na ndizokuthi mayindise kuni”.

“O! usakhe uye ngasehlathini?”

“Ewe, xa ndiziva ndicacele ukuhamba, lizolile nokuzola”.

“Ubovela uye nje wena kuthi xa ufuna ukusibona ungalindi ukuba ude usiwe. Akunakumka nathi ngoku?”

“Hayi, yekani uBambisela ahlale”, watsho uSibi.

“Nithi mandishiyeke ndililolo apha!”

“Andingeze ndiphatheke kakubi kodwa phaya?” wazibuzela uBambisela.

UMthendevu: “Kuba utheni?”

“Kuthiwe ndandikade ndiphi na ixesha eli lonke?”

“Akukho nja inokubuza loo nto. Siyayazi into yokuba izinja aziqondi kunye”.

“Kodwa andinakho ukuya kwanamhlanje”.

“Ikuwe loo nto”.

UBambisela wayengafuni kuyiva le nto yayithethwa nguSibi. Ukuba babelumkile benoSibi ngebabemke bobabini ngobo busuku.

“Anivumi kwahlukana noBhaku lo! Oko nanihamba naye apha nangoku nisengumtya nethunga!” watsho uBambisela.

“Akulula ukusilahla isihlobo sakho ungazanga uxabane naso”, waxela uMthendevu.

UBambisela ucofe uBhaku ezintetheni: “Ekubonakala ukuba inkulu le nto niyityayo endle”, watsho akugqiba. “Iinyama zenu zilukhuni. Ndiralela ukuba ndikhe ndimibone kukhanya. Nifancele ukuba neentsinga”.

“Zezi gusha zoKholisile bazityayo czi zibenze nyama-lukhuni”, wathetha uSibi ezisonga.

“Hayi, ungabe uphinde utsho, Ma”, wamqanda uMthendevu. “Uza kubangela ukuba sithatyathwe kakubi ngabantu ngento engekho”.

“Uyamva kakade?” watsho uBhaku.

Kube lixesha lokuba izinja zasendle zimke zaza zaqononondisana noBambisela ngokuya chlathini.

“Nibokuhlala nindilindile ke. Ndiya kubalapha kungcentsuku

ngaphi”, wathembisa uBambisela.

“Beningenakuhlala kude kuse na, Bhaku, nandule ke ukuba nihambe?” wababuza uSibi enqwaleka.

“Musa ukuzikhathaza ngathi. Asoyiki”, watsho uBhaku.

UMthendevu uve ngoKholisile sel’embetha ngentonga: “Yintoni emzini wam apha?” wangxola.

Uleqe uBhaku kodwa akanifumana. UMthendevu waya kuzimela ematyeni awayengentla komzi. Wabulela ukuba esindile ekufeni. UKholisile waziva izinja xa zazithetha, waza wazichwechwela. La madoda aychlangene nazo athi endaweni yokubikela ilali ngezinja azibonileyo, aya kugcina imizi yawo. UMthendevu wamva uKholisile ekubuyeni kwakhe cvela kusukela uBhaku. Wabona ukuba makangabi samkhangela uBhaku alale apho entla komzi aze avuke kusemnyama ahambe. Uqwebe ubuthongo, kodwa abakhe butsho ukuhla. Wada walala sel’engasazi ukuba angaze alale. Wavuka apho sekusile gedo. Wabona amakhwenkwe kaKholisile ephandle onke. Wathi makakhe ajonge ukuba aza kwenzani na. UKholisile ubize uSibi noBambisela wababuza ukuba badibene ngantoni na nezinja zasendle.

“Hayi, asazi nto ngazo”, wakhanyela uSibi.

“Niyazazi”, yatsho inkosi yakhe. “Nimana ukuthi nikholwa kukuhlala nathi nje nixela ukuba niza kusizisela amasela. Ndiqinisekile ukuba obu buchule bokuba iigusha oTawuse babufumana kuni apha. Baqala bathethe nani phambi kokuba bebe. Nangoku into echangele ukuba kuse iigusha zam zisaphelele kungenxa yokuba ndibabone besafika. Bebeze kuzo”.

“Iigusha ezibiwayo zezakho zodwa?” wafuna ukuqonda uSibi.

“Hayi”, watsho uKholisile. “Yonke imizi le ayisenagusha”.

“Kweli lakho ke lithi ubuchule abanabo babufumana ngokusuke baqale babhunge nathi, kungokuba bethetha nabani kule mizi ingenazinja?”

“Ninokuba niyaya nalapho nijonge indlela zenibaxelele senilapha ekhaya”.

“Uyaqikelela?”

“Ewe”.

“OMthendevu bebeze kukhangelainja elahlekileyo apha”.

“Ingathini ukuba ilahlekele apha ingasiyiyo yalapha?” wangxama uKholisile.

“Ungaphendulwa ngabo apho bona zinja bezifuna”.

“Yengubani loo nja bebeze kuyifuna?”

“NguTawuse”.

“UTawuse lo bendimsukela apha ngokuhlwa ulahleke nini?”

UBhaku wayebuyelela kuTawuse ngebala. Ebusuku ke babe-
ngahlulwa kakuhle nazizinja ezibaqhelileyo.

“Iyavakala nje le nja ukuba ithetha amampunge”, yatsho
inkwenkwe kaKholisile enkulu.

“Makwedini! bendingazi ukuthi kanti kusekho amaramncwa
akhoyo phakathi kweli khaya. Siya kusoloko sisithi izinja zase-
ndle ziyigqibile impahla kanti sekuqhuba nezi. Zibulaleni.
Ukuzigxotha akukunceda nto. Ndingaba ndandisa amasela
asendle ehleli emaninzi”.

“Singathini ukukugcina ithuba elide kangaka, nkosi, sikuse-
benzela, uze ngoku usibulale ngaphandle kwesizathu?” wathetha
kalusizi uSibi. “Neequsha zam zityiwa ngaphandle kwesizathu”.

“Yiyeke, Ma, inkosi yethu xa ibonile ukuba mayiwubulele
ngekrele umsebenzi wethu”, wenjenjalo uBambisela sel’ezini-
kele ekufeni. Wayesel’ekruqukile kukusoloko watyholwa nge-
zinto angazaziyo.

“Nithetha ukuba oMthendevu abasenakuza na kuthi ngenxa
yokuba babexabene nani, khonukuba bebengazanga kukhangela
nja ilahlekileyo?” wabuza uSibi.

“Ningaphulaphuli nale inye into, makwedini”, watsho uKho-
lisile. Azihlaba ke amakhwenkwe ngemikhonto.

“Kodwa niya kuhamba nzima nokuba sesingekho thina”,
ngamazwi awakhuphayo lawo uSibi sel’phansti ephfumla nge-
nxeba. Inja engazanga ithethe nguBambisela. Wesuka wanya-
mela qha. Kodwa wagqushalaza waya kuqhawukela kude. Yaba
ngumbono ombi lowo kuMthendevu ukufa kwezinja azalana
nazo ngaloo ndlela. Amakhwenkwe ambona esaqala ukusuka aza
afunza. Kwakungekho nanto afunza ngayo, esenza nje kuba aye-
qhele ukwenjenjalo ngenxeni engaphambili. Amsukela uMthe-
ndevu. Kwaphuma namadoda elali eza kuye. Wakha wabaleka
kancinane esithi abantu baza kubuye bajike. Bancekelela baya
kuba kufutshane nehlathi. Akazanga abe naxhala akuba schla-
thini. Ngethamsanqa wazifumana zikho zonke izinja emaweni
ngaphandle kukaTawuse. Wazixelela ngabantu abezayo. Abantu
babengazazi nalapho zihlala khona, kodwa beqonda ukuba zino-
kuba sendaweni eyinqaba. Kubekho imfene ebaleke phakathi

kwemithi eshinyencyo xa besembambeni yehlathi. Wakhwaza kwa oko uKholisile, wathi: "Nazo, madoda!"

Bayifuna abayifumana. UJongani ucebise ukuba makubhekwe emaweni. Bahamba bethalathalaza ke. Emadodeni kwakukho awayegqibele ukungena ehlathini esengamakhwenkwe. Ayesel'ediniwe ukuya kwawo apho, kwaye ayezele ngumsindo. Kuvele inyamakazi yeza ebantwini iqinisile. Bayisukela yabashiya, phofu iphuma apha phakathi kwabo.

"Ngebe siyibambile ke le nyamakazi ukuba besinezinja", uvakele esitsho uJongani.

"Ucinga ukuba asinakubamba nyamakazi ngaphandle kwezinja?" wambuza uKholisile.

"Asinakho", waqiniseka uJongani. "Jonga nangoku siphoswe yinyamakazi ize ngqo kuthi".

"Uzimisele gqitha ezinjani kungekho nto ziyenzayo".

"Xa sithetha inyaniso emsulwa mninzi umsebenzi wazo. Nonyakanje akuzingelwanga ngenxa yokungabikho kwazo".

"Andifuni nokuyiva oku loo nto. Abantu bayeke nje bangazingeli kuba bebehleli beza kuyeka".

"Ungandixelela wona owodwa umnyaka abakha abantu abazingela?" wabuza uJongani.

"Mininzi", watsho uKholisile.

"Ndandiphi mna?"

"Ndikwazi ngani ke?"

Ithe isakuyicinga inxalenye yamadoda indaba yomsebenzi wezinja, yaqonda ukuba uJongani unyanisile. YanguKholisile namadoda amathathu aphikayo ukuba zinoncedo. Bayokuma ngaphesheya komfula abantu malunga namawa. Abathetha. Bathengokuqonda ukuba ziza kubalahleka baya kuzo. Zakhwela emithini esemaweni. Bona ke ababi nakufikelela apho. Izinja zazisezifunde zonke izinto ezenziwa zizilwanyana zasendle. Ukujika kwabo baye kwindawo ezazihlala kuyo. Izikhumba zeequsha abazifumana apho zaba liqela. Izinja zazisenza iingubo ngazo. Zazingasukwanga nokusukwa zizambatha zigrangqalala. Bazithabatha ezo baqondayo ukuba bangazisebenzisa. Kwakukho nezaziziqwentshwana ekubonakala ukuba zazizezezinja ezincinane.

"Yintoni na le imbi nisenza yona zinjandini?" utshilo uKholisile.

UMthendevu wathi: "Sasinishenxele nje emizini yenu ngaba nisilandela ngani ngoku?"

“Iigusha zethu nizityela ni kaloku?”

“Sithi nathi masikhe sizive”.

“Nizithathela nje ningaziceli kutheni?”

“Siyeke ngabom ukungezi kufuna gusha kuni. Siyazi ukuba aningeze niziyeke nizinike nja. Side size kutsho apha nje senziwa kukungafumani izinto esizingqwenelayo. Imvula ingana kungasibekelanga ukuba ningaphainja igusha nina nivimba kangaka”.

“Kodwa ke zeniqonde ukuba asizifuyelanga nina”.

“Hambani nimke bantu sizokude sizenzele izinto zethu”, watsho uMthendevu.

“Kutheni ngathi nithetha ukuthanda kwenu nje nisakuba nilapha?”

“Sifanele sisendaweni yethu apha”.

Enyukile amadoda, achola amatye azigibisela. Zehla emithini ziqinisele izinja, zawaphosa nazo. Kunjalo nje zazimi kakuhle kuba zazivele ngasentla. Zicele neemfene ukuba zizincedisce. Hayi ke zona zatsho ununtu waphhepha ephhepile. UJongani wabethwa yimfene entlafunweni wopha. Bamthabatha abantu izinja sezisiza kuye. Inkosi kaBhaku yathi xa itsiba udonga yatyibilika yaya kuhlaba ngedolo phantsi yakruneka. Yavuka iqhwalela inyele. Amadoda namakhwenkwe abalekela kwimizi engaschlathini.

“Inene izinja czilapha chlathini azazi mntu”, watsho uJongani.

“Bafondini, niyabona ukuba akulula ukuzibetha izinja zase-ndle”, wathetha uKholisile. “Phofu azinakusinqabela kuphele xa sithe sacinga icebo. Ndiza kuthi kuni kunganjani na xa sinokubulala zonke izinja ezikhoyo esixekweni. Ukuba niyakholwa kukuba zibulawe kufuneka singabi sabhungisana nabaninizo, sihlabeinja esidibene nayo sigqithele phambili”.

Avuma amadoda. Asel’eqalisa kumzi awayekuwo. Akuzanga kubekho mntu uwathela nqa czilalini. Endaweni yaloo nto abantu babesuka bawabulele. Nabafana beclali ezazisenczinja bahamba begqogqa imizi enezinja. Zathi zisakuqonda ukuba kubi izinja zesaba zabheka chlathini, sezenzakele kodwa inxalenye yazo.

OMthendevu abazanga baqale baqonde ukuba ziyahlaselwa izinja, kodwa babe baqonda ngokubona kukho czinezinxenxe. Kwizinja ezaya kufikelela chlathini kwakukho ekwakusekukudala zalimala. Ezinye zazinemilenze emithathu, zizodwa czazi-

namehlo anemilanga. Zonke zazenakaliswe ngabantu. UXhonti wakha wabuza enyeinja ukuba kutheni na inendlebe enye nje, yathi yashunqulwa ngabantwana abangenambeko.

OKholisile baya nakwilali eyayinoTawuse. Baqala kanye kumzi awayekuwo. Saty'isikhali, yaw'inja. UTawuse wabaleka engekamhlabi. Waya kufika chlathini engakhanga aphumle nakanye. Esakuwufeza umnqweno wawo amadoda aya kwasehlathini. Enza umlilo ahamba ewufaka engceni ngaphandle kwicala elalivela umoya. Latsha ihlathi. Iinyamakazi zazivuka ebuthongweni zigqatswe lidangaty, ezinye ziranguke.

"Ngabantu aba benza le nto", utshilo uMthendevu, izinja liziyile.

"Babe bajongise phi ke xa besenjenje?" wambuza uBekelentloko.

"Bafuna ukutshisa thina akukho nto yimbi".

Zabakhangela izinja. Babhaqwa nguBekelentloko besabukele. "Cimani lo mlilo niwokhele apho", watsho. "Ningathini ukuza kwenza into enje apha? Ziza kusithela phi izilwanyana, kuba ihlathi liza kube lingenanga namasebe?"

UKholisile: "Kungokuba usithethisa nje umlilo wone ntoni, kabani?"

"Nitshisa ihlathi lezilwanyana".

"Laqala nini ukuba lelazo?"

"Kwamhla mnene".

Azama ukumrangqa amadoda, waza wabaleka. Zambona izinja.

"Nihlale nisilindele ke, nazi ukuba siza kuba lapho emizini yenu nanini na", watsho ebantwini uMthendevu.

Ihlathi lavutha ngamandla kwada kwasebusuku. Yayiqhashumba imithi kube ngathi kuqhawuka ntoni na nje. Nedangaty lalinesandi esikhulu esifana nesomoya omkhulu. UKholisile namadoda elali yakhe baya kufika bedani emizini yabo, ezona zinja bebezifuna bengazifumananga. Abuya amaxhego namaxhegwazana ezokuva iindaba kubo njengabantu ababebheke chlathini. Ayelibonile ihlathi ukuqhuma kwalo, athi izinja zinokuba zitshe zonke. Aqhweba izandla kusakuthiwa oBhaku basindile. Ithemba lajika laba lixhala.

Izinja ngaloo mini zalala endulini eyayingaphesheya kwchlati. UTawuse waxelelwa kusasa nguMthendevu ngokufa kukanina noBambisela. Izinja zazisoyika zisithi uza kothuka.

“Andibakhathalele nokuba bafile”, watsho uTawuse.

UMthendevu yena wayesiva kakubi kukufa kukaSibi. Yayisel’ingabo bobabini noTawuse izinja echezalanayo, bengazazi nabo ukuba baya kuphila ixesha elingakanani na emhlabeni. Izinja zifunc ukuya kubona ihlathi nendawo yazo. Zifike kusekho izikhondo zemithi esaqhumayo. Ihlathi lalikelekrele. Amawa ayesemi njengoko ayenjalo ngaphandle nje kokuba amatye ayemnyama ngumsi.

“Niyayibona into eyenziwe ngabantu enize nabo?” zikhwazile iimfene zingaphesheya kwamawa.

“Bebeze nathi na bebezihambela nje?” watsho uBekelentloko.

“Ewe, siza kutsho, kuba okoko sazalwa akuzanga kutshe apha”.

“Yeka, Bekelentloko, musa ukuphendula”, wamqanda uMthendevu.

“Ukuthetha kuzala into ezininzi. Singasuka sizibone sesixabana nezaa mfene. Ibe ziyaphazama. Akukho nja ibikhe yabiza abantu apha”. UTawuse ufunc ukwenza izwi ezinjeni. Ukususa kwakhe ukuthetha wathi: “Mawethu! kummandi kum xa izinja ebendinazo apha zisekho kubi kwelinye icala, kuba amawethu abesemizini azingxwelera. Nawo ngoku kufuneka amkhuphe umntu ezingqondweni zawo. Nam ndiyafika bendisaye kuqonda izinto ezithile emizini. Intlalo yakhona andiyithandanga konke ndibangwa kukuqhela ukuzilawula. Abantu abakazimisel ukuziphatha ngeyona ndlela ifanelekileyo izinja.

Ndibone izinto ezininzi ngoku bendingekho. Isizathu ebesibangela ukuba silambe apha kukunqena ukucinga. Sathi oko sayeka imizi esasikade sisiba kuyo asaba safuna kukhangela eminye. Apho ndivela khona kukho iigusha ekuthiwa zihlala emathanga. Zona sinokuthi ukuba sizibile kungabikho namkhondo. Kuthiwa nabaninizo abazazi kakuhle amanani azo. Masibulale yonke into efuyiweyo esidibene nayo, nokuba yinkomo ukuba ayinakusoyisa xa siyibamba. Abantu baza kulihlawula igazi lezinja abaliphalazileyo. Akukhathaliseki nokuba banezixhobo ezingakanani na”.

“UTawuse uyavakala”, utshilo uBekelentloko. “Kodwa ndinendwana endiyikhalazelayo le ithi makubulawe yonke into efuyiweyo. Umntu ushiyelwa ni? Siza kuthi sisakumyecka amane ukuza apha axelise izolo. Neegusha akufunekanga siye kuziba ngobusuku. Singayanga kula mathanga axelwa nguTawuse,

masihluthe ezi zaluswe ngamakhwenkwe emadlelweni, athi ukuba anento eninzi yokuthetha siwabulale. Akusekho nanto ndiyicengayo emntwini kakade”.

“Akuzukusuka ubaleke na xa sisilwa nabo? wambuza uMthendevu.

“Abantu andiboyiki nakancinane”, wazichaza uBekelentloko. “Wena uyandazi sisemizini. Into endingenakuze ndiyenze kukulwa nabantu ndindedwa”.

“Ndiyakuva. Kuza kuthetha mna ke ngoku”, utshilo uXhonti.

“Andazi nokuba ndizakuthetha kakuhle na, ngenxa yento yokuba intloko yam ibuhlungu. Ndiyaqonda ukuba yenziwa kukuqhunyiselwa ngumsi, into ebendingasayiqhelanga. Nantsi indawo ebalulekileyo: ukumka kwethu ebantwini sasithe siya kuzakhela eyethu imizi. Sesiza kuwugqiba umnyaka singenayo nendlwana eyodwa. Salala emaweni mhla safika ehlathini nangoku sisalala apho. Neengonyama zingasifumana sisisulu xa sihleli ngolu hlobo, silala nje phandle. Siyatyiswa nayingqele xa umoya usiza ngaphambili kula mawa. Kuyafana nje noku-ngathi sisethafeni apho kungekho zindawo zisithileyo. Lilonke ke ndifuna ukuthi masiqalise namhlanje ukwakha izindlu zethu. Izinja ezizimfama neziziqhwala ziza kusebenza. Ngamchlo nemilenze izinto ezingekhoyo. Amandla wona aphelele. Kanti nezaluphelelo kuza kufuneka zisebenzile nazo. Akuzukubakho nja iza kuhlala endaweni engayisebenzelanga. Kuza kulunga ninyule ngokuinja eza kuniphatha. Ndidibanisa nam ke. Azinakuhamba kakuhle izinto zenu ningenankokeli. Ndimi”.

Izinja zenza ngathi aziyihoyanga konke le nto yonyulo.

“Uthi iimfama neziqhwala zitheni?” ubuzile uZonele.

“Ubulapha ngoku bendithetha”, wamgwexa uXhonti. “Xa kufunwa isiphatha-mandla kujongwa izinto ezininzi ezinje- ngesidima, ukuthembeka nokukhalipha”, yatshoinja eyayisel’- inamava.

“Ningabushiya ubukhali bengqondo eyona nto ibaluleke kuzo zonke. Kanti nobungangamsha kulungile ukuba bubekho, inkokeli yoyikeke ingadelwa naziingqeqe. Ingathi uTawuse lo noBhaku noMthendevu banganawo amandla okuziphatha izinja, ndingazi phofu nokuba ndiqhathwa yintoni na. Ngeentsukwana ezimbalwa ndinabo apha sendinezinto endiziphawuleyo kubo. Mna ndithi makukhethwe kubo bobathathu”.

Le nja yayithetha yayivela eNjica. Yayintanganye no Beke-

lentloko aba. Izinja zisebeze zonke nangona kwakungekho nto ifuna kuhletywa. Zazingenakuthetha zonke, kuba ezinye zazingamayilo. Neminyewu yayikho phakathi kwazo. Kwaxoxa ezaziseziqhelile ukuhlala endle zodwa. Zaburola bonke ubuciko, bazo. Kwezazifika zazikho ezazinokuba njengoBhaku. Kodwa kwathi ngenxeni yokungabi nalwazi ngemeko azajongwa. Kuskumeinja eyayiphuma kwilali yoTawuse, yathetha ixesha elide isekelezela ukuba kunyulwe uMthendevu, ixela ke iziganeko wayekade ezenza ukususela ebunjaneni bakhe kude kuzokuthi xhaxhe kwithuba eyayimchaza ngalo. Yabetha kwathi thaa ezinjeni. Zasho zamcacele nezazimcaphukela. NoBhaku wayekhohlwa ukuba kubekwe yena, eyona nja wayevana nayo nangaphezulu kukaTawuse. Phofu wayengavuyayo nokuba kwakunyulwe yena Bhaku xa sekude kwahambeka ngolo hlobo. Kodwa ukudalwa kwakhe wayengeyonja ithanda amawonga nje ngezinye ezazisoloko zanzwenela ukongamela imicimbi nokuba ingaphezulu kwazo.

Yaba nguMthendevu keinja enyulwayo ukuba iphathe izinja ezisehlathini. UXhonti umcelile ukuba akhe ayokuba phambi kwezinye izinja ukwenzela ukuba zimazi zonke nezifikayo. Wathi akuma ngaphambili ke uMthendevu wasel'eqonda ukuba makenze ilizwi.

“Ndiyavuyiseka kukuthi kanti uXhonti lo chleli nje uezinto azicingayo ezingaba luncedo esizweni”, wenjenjalo ke. “Le nja uMthendevu niyinyuleyo, uMna ke ngoko, ayingeke ibe namava ngaphezu kwezinye izinja ezindala ezilapha. Ndiyaqiniseka ukuba nezi zizintanga zam zinokuba nezinto ezingandogqithayo ngazo. Njengokuba iza kuba ndim nje ophetheyo, siya kuthi ukuze siqhube kakuhle nindinqande xa ndisenza into eniyibonayo ukuba yimposiso. Maxa wambi ndiza kuthi into ilungile, kanti akunjalo. Ndiyinja esithandayo isizwe sakokwayo. Asingomnqweno wam ukuba ndibe ndigrwangxulana nezinja ngentetho. Izinja mazenze nje ngoko zixcelelwa. Akulunganga ukudukisa kwenja xa inikwa umsebenzi. Inja ukuba inenkani, ndiya kuyenza iphele tu. Imbi into yokubainja ibe ithundezwa ngakumbi xa kuncedwa yona”. Wahlala phantsi uMthendevu.

“Ndikhangele nje mna ingathi kungona siza kuhlala kamnandi ngoku”, watsho yena uBhaku. “Besikade sihleli ngokwezi zilwanyana zilapha zisoloko zitsibatsiba emithini. Thina sivele ebantwini, masizibonise ukuba sinolwazi esinalo. Mna ndiya-

yithanda into entle, nomsebenzi andiwunqeni. Sendiqondile ukuba izinja ziyakholwa nguwe, Mthendevu. Ngokungathandabuzekiyo yonke into oyenzayo iya kuhamba kakuhle ngemvisiswano. Bendingavuyayo xa besinokuthi sakhe izindlu czinokuba ngaphezulu kwezabantu ngobuhle nangokuqina. Nemfuyo masibe nayo njengabo, asinakho ukusoloko sisiba njalo. Sendidiniwe mna kukuthi xa ndikhanuka inyama ndibheke emizini”.

“Iigusha zokufuya siza kuzizuya njani, phi na?” ubuzile uMthendevu.

“Siza kuya kuzithimba ebantwini”, waxela uBhaku. “Ezaa nkomo nezaa gusha banazo phaya bazifumana ngezikhali”.

UXhonti: “Kusekhoinja engaba isenombuzo?”

“Hayi”, zalandula izinja.

“Kungona nixoxayo ngoku ihlathi selitshile?” itshilo imfene iphezulu cliweni. Yayingayivanga nentetho yezinja.

UMthendevu ubizele kuye uBhaku noXhonti bahamba. Izinja bazishiye nenze umyalezo othi maze zingemki emaweni baza kubuya.

“Ndifuna khe siye kukhangela indawo esingemisa kuyo izindlu kunye neentango”, watsho uMthendevu.

“Kuza kwakhiwa kwalapha ehlathini?” wafuna ukuqonda uBhaku.

“Ewe”.

“Kunganjani ngaphandle kwehlathi?”

“Akunakulunga. Phofu lo mhlaba ungaphandle mhle, kuba womile, into ekhoyo andiwuthandi. Abantu bangayazi yonke inkqubo yethu xa sinokwakha kuwo. Apha ehlathini abanaku-fumane beze nje. Nayizolo bangene beziqinisile. La makhwenkwe ayesoloko esiza apha nezinja usakhe uwabone?”

“Hayi. Kakade ayaphi?”

“Oyika thina. Ndiyaqonda ukuba athi naxa sel’esiza ajike esithubeni. Uyabona ke xa sisekuhlani singatshiselwa mihla le ngoKholisile, kufuneka ukuba sisoloko sisakha into enganasi-phelo. Akunjalalo?”

“Ewe, kunjalo”, wangqina uBhaku.

“Uthethe nawe Xhonti xa ngaba ndiyaphazama kule nto yendawo yokwakha,” watsho uMthendevu.

“Wenza kakuhle”, wakhuthaza uXhonti.

“Kaloku ngoku singabalapha. Kufanelekile ukuba yonke into

yethu ibe lapha. Asizukude sigqibe ihlathi lonke”, waxela uMthendevu.

“Masakhe kule ndawo sikuyo”, wacebisa uBhaku. “Ikhangela ngokungathi intle”.

“Ewe, intle”, wavuma uXhonti. “Kukho namatye esinokugcakamela kuwo ilanga xa kubanda. Kanti namanzi nanga kufutshane, asinakuhamba kakhulu xa sifuna ukusela”.

“Ingaba yintoni ke enye esiyifunayo?” watsho uMthendevu.

“Uthi Xhonti la matye akasobe aphele kuba siza kwakha ngawo iintango? wafuna ukwazi uBhaku.

“Iintango azizukwaxhiwa ngamahlahla na?” wabuza uXhonti.

“Bendikholwa ukuba ibe zezamatye”, waxela uMthendevu.

“Akanamsebenzi nokuba aphelile. Singaya kuhlala naphaya emaweni. Asikudanga xa silapha. Masiye kulanda izinja ke”, watsho uBhaku.

II

Zithe cwaka izinja besakufika kuzo oMthendevu kungakhanga kutshiwo ukuba mazithule. Zalindela ilizwi eliza kuphuma. Uzithabatlule uMthendevu wazisa apho kuza kwakhiwa khona. UTawuse wabonakala engatyhilekanga ebusweni, ekucace into yokuba wayeyifuna le ndawo yokukhokela. Ukrwece uBhaku wathi makhe eze ngakuye.

“Khawutsho, Bhaku, uyakholwa wena yile nto yokumyulwa kukaMthendevu?” wafuna uluvo lwakhe.

“Ndiyakholwa”, waphendula uBhaku.

“Mna andiyithandi konke loo nto”, wazichaza uTawuse.

“Kungani ukuba ungayithandi?”

“Uyakhumbula ukuba ndim owathi izinja mazize endle?”

“Ewe”, wamvumela.

“Ke kunganyulwa mna nje ndiphathe izinja kungasiphi isizathu?”

“Kaloku, Tawuse, besekutshiwo kwathiwa kuza kunyulwa ngezenzo. UMthendevu lo ufumaniseke eyiyona nja ingaphathayo”.

“Kuqhutywe kakubi. Akukho nja ingaqala into 'ze ngoku kuthi xa sekuza kulunga ityeshelwe”.

“Musa ukukhalaza. Uza kuyinikwa indawo eyeyakho”.

“Engaphantsi kwale kubekwe kuyo uMthendevu?”

“Ubungenakunikwa kwayona”.

“Ndifuna ibe ndim phambili”.

“Akunakuze ubekwe wena, Tawuse, usikhokele ungathe-mbekanga. Uyafika nangoku, uvela apho singaziyo. Usishiya apha silamba, kanti noko usajonge ukusikhokela. Okuya kwakho emizini kucacisa into yokuba wawungaqinisekanga kule nto wawuyithetha. Kakade bekutheni ukuze uye emizini? Ubaleka indlala apha, ngoku selusenza ngathi ubuye kukhangela indlela ekuhleliwe ngayo zizinja emizini. Uyazi nje intlalo yezinja kwalapho wawuvela khona ubuye kukhangela yiphi? Asinakuqhathwa nguwe apha. Futhi xa unento elapha kuwe ezingqondweni yikhuphe, nazi izinja,” waqokela ngelo uBhaku.

UBhaku uye kumthela tshuphe uMthendevu ngento ethethwa nguTawuse.

“Ndihle ndabona ukuba ikhona into eza kuvela”, watsho uMthendevu.

“Ungaxhali akukho nto aza kuyenza”, wamqinisa uBhaku.

“Kha niphulaphule zinja”, wemisa uMthendevu, “Ndinqwanela ukuba ngaba kukho izinja ezinemisebenzi eziyaziyo zize ngaphambili kum”.

Ubuzo kwinjana eyayincinane into eyayiyenza emizini, yathi yona yayikhonkotha kuphela. Zayithi gquzu intsini izinja.

“Hayi, musani ukuhleka”, wazinqanda uMthendevu. “Ngunmsebenzi omkhulu lowo”.

UMthendevu lo wayezithanda injana ezingaphantsi kwakhe. Wayesonwaba xa ahleli nazo nangaphezulu kwaxa encentanga zakhe. “Ngoku siza kuqalisa umsebenzi,” yaxela inkokeli. “Masisondeze la matye alapha kufutshane. Izindlu necentango ziza kwakhiwa ngaxesha nye”.

Uzahlulahlule izinja ngokwakhe. Kwakho eziza kufunqula amatye, zaza ezinye zabelwa ukwakha. Imisetyenzana enje ngokusiphula ingca nezikhondo zemithi yanikelwa izinja ezalupheleyo nezincinane kwanemilwelwe. Ziphithizele ke umsebenzi ziwuthabatha ngamabhongo. Zadinwa kungekudala zibambe amatye.

“Tawuse ube ngathi uyakhawuleza kunoko, ilanga limkile”, wamxhalisa uMthendevu.

“Ukukhawuleza kukuthini?” wambuza uTawuse.

“Ndixela ukuba uthi xa ubamba ilitye ulithi hlasi ubaleke nalo uye kulinikainja eyakhayo”.

“Uze uqonde kakuhle ukuba amatye anzima”.

“Naba oBhaku bebaleka nawo”.

“Mhlawumbi asilingani ngamandla”.

“Uze utshi ukuba uyoyiswa kukubamba ilitye uliphakamise nangamazinyo ulitsale”.

“Alingeze lashukuma ilitye ngaloo ndlela”.

“Ndifanele ukutsho andiboni yimbi elingeza ngayo kubakhi”.

“Xa liqengqwa kunganjani?”

“Zama nangaleyo”.

Ulingile ke ukuliqengqa clinye uTawuse, akalunga. Amatye ayengenakuqengqeka ehlathini njengoko umhlaba wawuthambile, engena ke kuwo. Ulithabathile ngomsindo ngoku ilitye elo. Kwathi kanti usuke sekukhoinja emva kwakhe. Yangila waya kuwa, nayo yaya kuwa kwelinye icala. Qhu! Angqubana amatye kwaqhuma umsi. Ibe yileyoinja yavuka yazibalekela.

“Iyawa yintoni na, Tawuse?” wamangaliswa uMthendevu.

“Asiyile nja le iza kuziganxa kum indlela inkulu kangaka”, wachaza uTawuse.

“Ngxe-c! Tawuse!!” yacela uxolo le yayigilene naye. “Ndize sendingasaboni ngamchlo la. La matye enza incilikithi”.

“Nibokuvula amchlo xa nisebenza, kuba niyakusuka nenzakalisane”, wayala uMthendevu.

“Kungakho ntoni xa sinokuwayeka amatye sakhe ngodaka?” wabuza uTawuse.

“Udaka alunakwakha zindlu zomeleleyo”, yaphendula inkokeli.

“Kungokuba kunganjani xa sinokumba imingxuma sihlale kuyo. Nguwona msebenzu ungalula lowo”.

“Njandini! Uyazi nawe ukuba imingxuma ithandwa ziinyoka. Akukho nja ifuna kuhlala mgxunyeni apha ngaphandle kwakho. Nawe wenziwa kukunqena”.

UTawuse ubonile ukuba makanyeke uMthendevu, kuba wayeba ngathetha naye asuke amngxamele ngokwenjana enge-nangqondo. Izinja zaya kuwulahla umsebenzi sekuhlwilile, zingasafuni nokutya ngenxa yokudinwa. Nangona zaziqalise emva kwemini ukwakha, indima yazo yayibonakala. UTawuse wasala emaweni ngosuku lwesibini. UMthendevu wambona sel'csemsebenzini ukuba akakho. Wacela uBhaku ukuba baye kumlanda. Bamfumana ezilalisile.

“Kutheni usclapha nje, Tawuse, kukudala izinja zimkile?” wambuza uMthendevu.

“Andukuphumelela ukuhamba namhlanje”, watsho uTawuse.
“Ndiziva ndingaphilanga”.

“Ugula yintoni?”

“Umzimba wam ubuhlungu wonke”.

“Wenziwe buhlungu yintoni?”

“Kokwa kusindwa ngamatye izolo”.

“Ukuba uthetha loo nto neyethu ibuhlungu, besisebenza sonke. Ubumelwe kukuba ncentloni uzicenge uye emsebenzini. Izinja zinokukuthela nqa xa unokusuka uhlale apha umkhulu kuphume iinjana ezincinane”.

“Hayi, ndiyekeni. Andihambi”.

“Uthi ngaba injongo zikaTawuse ziphi, Bhaku?” waqondisisa uMthendevu.

“Ndithi mna engavumi nje ukuhamba wenziwa kukungakhohwa kukulawulwa nguwe”, watsho uBhaku.

“Ke, ndingamenza njani eve ngam?”

“Icebo linye kukuba umqhubo ngenkani”.

“Nguye lo engavumi”.

“Mtye, ndikhona”, wafunza uBhaku.

UMthendevu uye engxamise kuTawuse wafika wathi kuye:
“Sukuma uhambe. Andikholelwa kule nto uyithethayo”.

UMthendevu uthi akubona ukuba akamkhathalele wamthi nyaxa ngeenzapho egxalabeni. Balwa ke ngoku. UBhaku ubambe uTawuse wamwisa.

“Heke! Bhaku”, wabulela uMthendevu.

Bamkrwitsha uTawuse wada waphantsa ukuyoba. Utake phandle besakumyeka.

“Ndiya kukubulala ukuba akunakwenza njengokuba ndikuxelela”, wamqwebisela uMthendevu.

Wakhathazeka kakhulu uTawuse kukulunywa zizinja awayezithembile, awayenokuthi nokuba uvelelwa nayintoni na embi acce uncedo kuzo. Kodwa ngabana zazingathanga zimhlanganyele ngele kwakume ngaye. Izindlu ezazisakhiwa zizinja zazintlanu. Ngosuku lwesibini sisakha kwaba sekukho udonga olugqityiweyo. Lwaluluhle kubonakala ukuba lwenziwe zizinja ezinobugcisa.

UTawuse umane ebiza izinja nganye ezibuza ukuba ziyithanda kangakanani na inkokeli yazo. Zakho ezithi ziya yicaphukela. Wayefuna ukuba azahlule izinja ahambe nazo zingabiphantsi kuka Mthendevu. Akazange aphinde ahambe noBhaku ukusu-

sela okoko babekhe bamtya. Wavana noZonele. Izindlu necntlanti zagqitywa kungazanga kubekho nja ilimalayo. Ngomhla ezaziza kusungula ngawo ukuya kuhlala emzini wazo, wathetha kakhulu uMthendevu ngokuthi ziwunyamekele umsebenzi wazo. Wathi mazinike kusakhanya emaweni. Zanela zonke kwezo ndlu zazakhiwe. Waba mkhulu umoya wokungevisani phakathi kwezinja noMthendevu. Akaba nakuyinceda nganto loo nto. Izinja zaya kuzifunela iigusha emadlelweni. Zabuya nemihlambi emininzi mhla zaqala ukuphuma. Zabatshutshisa gqitha abantu ngeli xesha zasezinomzi, izibaya zazo zasoloko zizele qhu yimpahla. Kodwa zona zazingafani nabantu zifuyela emlonyeni. Kwakungacingi ukuze kuphele iintsuku ezintlanu iigusha ziseninzi. Amadoda ezizwe aqokelelana ngoku ezama ukufumana icebo anokuthi ngalo asindise impahla yawo ezinjeni. Usuku awayehlangene ngalo lwaba lukhulu kakhulu ezimbalini zomhlaba. Aya kwakusasa enkundleni kumzi ekwakuza kuxoxelwa kuwo. Ayesazi phofu ukuba akuzukuthethwa kwakusasa. Umntu uyangxama xa enento emxhalisileyo.

Umzi eyayenzelwe kuwo imbizo wawuseNtakana. UKholisile naye wayejonge ukuya apho, kodwa wakha walala ekhaya efuna ukuba ade aphelele amadoda. Wayewabona kakuhle ukuza kwawo evela kwiinkalo ngeenkalo. Kwakukho nawayesihla ngasemzini wakhe. Ube wahamba naye. Wafika wakhahlela emadodeni. Kwakuzele enkundleni kungekho nendawo yokunyahthela. Isithethi sokuqala yaba nguJongani. Wavela wenjenje:

“Intsusa-mabandla, madoda, zizinja. Ndinga ukuba nikhe neva ngabantu ababethunyiwe ukuba bameme le mbizo ukuba kuya kuthethwa ngazo. Umcimbi esidibene ngawo apha utya wonke ubani. Asisenampahla. Akukho mntu ungayiboniyo loo nto. Isizathu sokuphela kwayo sinye, kukutyiwa zizinja ezazikade zihleli apha phakathi kwethu ngaphambili, zaza ukufuduka kwazo zafuna ukuyitshabalalisa imfuyo yethu. Imihlambi yegusha ebidla ngokunqumbana emadlelweni mhla ligqatsileyo ilanga, aningekhe niyibone. Endingazi ukuba izinja ziyithini na impahla engaka. Ifike ibe ngummangaliso kum loo nto yokuphela kwempahla ngethutyana clingephi, ngaphaya koko ibe mbi. Yinto engalunganga ukuqabuka sel’ulihlwempu ngeindlelana engaqondakaliyo. Siwenzile onke amalinge okukhusela imfuyo yethu, kodwa asancedeka. Amacebo akakho. Sesikhe sasuka sisithi siya kubulala izinja sasuke sabuya salimala. Nezi

iigusha ziphuma kusasa nje kusenokwenzeka zingabuyi, ibe ngoku ziyiyekile nalaa nto bezikade ziyenza yokuthabatha igusha ibenye, zisuke zibe iigusha ezininzi. Kwezam iimbono bendisithi makuyiwe kuzo kucelwe uxolo. Ingathi lilona cebo linokusilungela clo, ndingazi phofu. Namanye amadoda aseza kuvelisa awawo”.

UKholisile watshijila wajonga kwelinye icala ebonakalisa ukungakholwa kwakhe yintetho kaJongani. Yavakala kakubi kuye into yokuya kucela uxolo ezinjani. Wayexolele ukuba kumke neyokugqibela igusha engazanga athi taru kuzo.

“Nantsi indawo endifuna ukuyiqonda”, wakhawuleza watsho uKholisile. Amwawa amadoda enkundla athi makahlale phantsi engasafuni kuva nto ngaye.

“Andinakungathethi apha nokuba sekutheni na”, wawaxelela uKholisile ebetha ngentonga yakhe phantsi. “Xa kanti kufuneka ndingathethanga nje ngebe ndingamenywanga ukuba ndibe lapha. Ndifuna inkundla indazise ngoku ukuba ukuthetha oku kukhethe abantu abathile. Nam ndilahlekelwe yimpahla nje-ngamntu wonke, kwaye nezinja endandizifuyile zikwezi kuthiwa makuyiwe kuzo. Nithi ke nina mandibe simumu, into eza kusuka yamkele loo nto ithethwa ngamanye amadoda. Hayi bo! andivumi. Ndingasuke ndiye kungqengqa emzini wam kube kanye endaweni yaloo nto”.

Inkosi kaBhaku endala ize kumcenga ukuba eve. Kuphela kwendoda eyayivana naye leyo, nangona babesoloko baxabana. Babesithi ukuba baxabene kusasa ubone sebhamba kunye kungekatshoni nclanga. “Ungakhe ulinge undayame”, uyigatyile uKholisile inkosi kaBhaku endala esolula isandla sakhe.

“Ngumntu onani lo ungafuni kuxelelwa?” yamangaliswa inkosi kaBhaku.

“Unyanisile noko, madoda, uKholisile”, utshilo omnye umfo. “Ilungile into yokuba umntu ayekwe ayikhuphe imbilini yakhe. Mhlawumbi naye unecbebo analo phaya kuye, ibe le nto yezinja uyazi ngaphezulu kwethu. Usuka nazo kude”.

Ude wanikwa ithuba lokuba athethe ke uKholisile. Amadoda ayesithi makathule nje, ayengasalindelanga luncedo lunokuvela kuye. Zazininzi izinto awayezona enqandwa.

“Ndithanda ukukhe ndenze umbuzo ubemnye nje apha emadodeni”, watsho uKholisile. “Izinja aziyi kusivuyelela na xa siya kugoba phantsi kwazo?”

“Usemile ke?” wabuza uJongani.

“Bendithe umbuzo wam uza kuba mnye”.

“Kaloku uxolo olu yiyona nto izijikayo ingqondo cziqulathe umoya ombi. Uthi usakuthi: ‘uxolo’ emntwini aseske ayeke yonke into abeyicinga”, watsho uJongani.

“Asithethi ngabantu apha, mfondini. Sithetha ngezinja”.

“Zicinga ngokwabantu nazo”, watsho uJongani. “Ukuze zimke nje zazifuna ukuxelisa thina. Andinankolo yokuba zingafuna izinto ezazizifuna kanti zinengqondo eyahlukileyo. Wena ke ube usithi kungathiwani?”

Wathula uKholisile, wahlala phantsi.

“Bekunganjani xa besinokuzibiza izinja zibuyele kuthi?” yatsho inkosi kaBhaku endala. “Azinakuze ziyenze le mbuq zihlala nathi”.

Ixokozele yonke inkundla icacisa ukuvumelana nayo. “Kungokuba ziya kuwanikwa na la malungelo zaziwabiza zisakuba zilapha?” wafuna ukwazi uKholisile. “Ze niqonde ukuba azizikuvuma ukuhlala nani njengezinja”.

“Mna, nkundla, ndithi maziphathwe ngokwabantu”, iseyinkosi kaBhaku endala ke leyo.

“Amacebo eniwabekayo apha mabini”, kusathetha uKholisile, “ke mna ndingakholwa kukukhe ndive ukuba inkundla ikholwa liliphi na.” Amadoda athi akholwa leli lamva.

“Njengokuba senzile nje singabaninimizi”, watsho uKholisile.

“Apha emizini yethu kukho izinto czingachukunyiswayo naziintsapho zethu. Izinja azizukunqwenela ukuba zingaphatha yonke into na?”

“Hayi”, yala inkosi kaBhaku endala. “Azinakusilawula emizini yethu. Zinokulinganiswa neentsapho zethu, nazo zibe nemida ezingayigqithiyo”.

“Ndiyakuva, mmelwane”.

Amadoda awuxovula umbandela wezinja ngokwaneleyo, agqiba kungekho inasikrokro. Nawayengazanga athethe ayehluthi ezingqondweni zawo. Ukhe wabuzwa uKholisile ukuba uyavuma na yena siqu ukuba izinja zilandwe.

“Xa inkundla ifikelele kwizigqibo ezinjalo andinakuma ecaleni nededwa”, waxela uKholisile. “Ndoyiswa nje yiyo”.

“Ke, kaloku ke, madoda, siza kuhlabela mgama singekade sishiywe lilanga”, utshilo uJongani. “Makukhethwe amadoda aza kuya kuthetha nezinja azibize”.



“Ucinga ukuba angamangaphi?” yabuza inkosi kaBhaku endala.

“Ndithi anokuba mathathu”.

“Hayi, makangasesuke abe mancinci kangaka”.

Inkundla yathi makabe sibhozo ke, noKholisile ambalela kwelo qela.

“Makayekwe yena ummelwane”, yaccebisa inkosi kaBhaku endala.

“Ingaseyipatyalaka yonke loo nto besizama ukuyilungisa esakuya phaya chlathini”. Yayixela uKholisile ke.

“Akunamsebenzi nokuba andiyanga”, watsho uKholisile.

Kwasekufakwa mntu wumbi ke endaweni yakhe.

La madoda asibhozo ayalelwa ukuba aze azifikelele zonke iindawo ezinezinja. Amadoda ayechwayitile ngokungathi impahla yawo seliyekiwe ukutyiwa zizinja. Inkosi kaBhaku endala nayo yaba kwiqela ekwakuthiwe maliye emahlathini. Yayithenjiwe ukuba ayinakungezi nazo izinja. Yayingumntu okwaziyo ukuyicoselela into ide iphumelele ngale ndlela ebefuna yona. UKholisile wazibona izithunywa xa zazishiya imizi ngomhla ezazisiya ngawo chlathini, waza wathetha nazo.

“Kunjenje nje ngulaa mfo”, yatsho inkosi kaBhaku endala igxanya. “Uya kuze enze into engaphezulu kwale”.

Athi amadoda akufika chlathini elali noTawuse awavela ecaleni amawa esithi ngokwawo afuna izinja ziwabone selekho, ukwenzela ukuba zingabi nakubaleka. Akazifumana apho emaweni, zisemzini wazo. Azibuza ezinyamakazini ukuba ziphi na, zawaxelela. Abonwa nguBhaku xa sel'ekufutshane nezindlu. Wakhonkotha kungasekho nokuba angaya kwazisa izinja ngawo. UMthendevu wakhawuleza waphuma esakuliva ilizwi lika Bhaku, ezama ukuqonda ukuba ingaba konakele ni na. Ukukhonkotha zazisezikuvalile izinja, kuba zisithi kubiza izilwanyana. Izilwanyana zehlathi zazisoloko zazicenga ukuba zikhonkotha. Ukukhonkotha kwakuvakala kamnandi kuzo, kangangokuba zazide ziziccele ukuba zizifundise. Zibuye zonke ke izilwanyana zizokumamela, zisakukhonkotha. Ngoku zingavumi ukumka nokuba seziyckile. UMthendevu wathi esakuvela abantu sebemi phambi kwendlu awayekuyo, wakha woyika. UBhaku wayekhe ade afune nokubamba. Wayengoyiki xa ebhadiwe. Ezinye izinja ezazize kukroba zaphethuka zatsho ngaphakathi zisithi ukufa sekufikile. Phandle yanguBhaku, noMthendevu noTawuse.

“Nibekwa yintoni apha bantundini?” wabuza uMthendevu.

“Sihambele kuni, Mthendevu”, yaphendula inkosi kaBhaku endala.

“Nizokuthini kuthi?”

“Soloko sinesikhalo esinaso ngento embi enisenza yona yokutya impahla yethu. Khanenze kuhle, mzi wakwanja”.

“Ngobani abaphethe kakubi abanye, kukho nina, kukho thina?”
“Nini”.

“Hi?” “Asizukuvana kakuhle yile nja ikhonkothayo. Yima! Bhaku!” wamqanda uMthendevu.

UBhaku uyokuriwula inkosi yakhe endala, phofu akade ayibambe. Wamngxolisa uMthendevu.

“Uthi ke ngobani abaphethe kakubi abanye?” wabuza loo mbuzo kanjaqo emva kokuphazanyiswa nguBhaku.

“Nini. Thina ngokwethu akukho nto yenu sakha sayibulala. Nani ngokwenu asizanga sinibulale”.

“Baphi oSibi, ziphi zona ezinye izinja ebenikade nizibulala?”

“Ewe, khona zikhe zabalawa izinja, kodwa ngezizathu ezibonakalayo, kanti ke nani beningabayekanga abantu nibatya. Baninzi abantu abazele ngamanxeba emizimbeni yabo”.

“Kanene ukuluma umntu kudibene nokumbulala? Khawundiphe kuloo ndawo”.

“Kudibene. Uthi umntu akulunywa yinja nokuba yintoni na enobuhlungu afe”.

“Kukufa ngengozi oko, iinjongo zenja zingekho apho”.

“Ukufa kunye kuyafana. Asizazi thina ukuba zibe ziphi na iinjongo zenja xa iluma umntu”.

“Xela umntu abe mnye owakha wafa linxeba lenja?”

“Akakho endimaziyo, kodwa kuthiwa bakhe babekho”.

“Uthetha ngento ongayaziyo nawe. Kunjalo nje nenze into embi, bantu, le yokurintyelainja ngentambo emqaleni niyiruc ixhathisa, ikhala, niye kuyibulala. Kube kodwa ukukhe nithi xainja izele iinjana ezininzi nithume amakhwenkwe ukuba aye kuzibulala eningazithandiyo nezingabekwanga mntu. Azithabathe ke azinkale ematyeeni. Zibuhlungu kakhulu ezo nto kuthi. Andazi ukuba aninamasikizi na nibadala nje. Ubulungisa obu nijonge ukubenza ebantwini bōdwa?”

Amadoda azive enosizi.

“Ningabisakhathazeka, Mthendevu,” yangxengxezisa inkosi kaBhaku endala. “Into esiyithunyiweyo apha kuni kukuba size kunicela ukuba niphindele emakhaya. Intlalo ayisayi kufana neyangaphambili”.

“Okokukuthi niyaluqonda uhlobo ebenisiphethe ngalo ukuba belungalunganga?”

“Ewe, siyaluqonda. Asobe siphinde senze izinto ezingangqinelaniyo nemiphfumlo yenu”.

“Niqinisekile ukuba aniyi kusipha amathambo odwa xa kukho inyama?”

“Siya kuninika yonke into etyiwa ngumntu”.

“Niya kuthini mhla inayo? Aniyi kusibeka emakhaleni?”

“Niza kuhla nathi ezindlwini”.

Wancuma uMthendevu kwakutshiwo eqonda ukuba baza kuzifumana zonke izinto ababekade bezifuna.

“Ngubani lo uthi impahla yenu ityiwa sithi?” wahambisa.

“Siyazi ukuba ithatyathwa nini. Kukho imizi enikhe nibonwe kuyo nisezintlanti”.

“Sisinda njani kuyo nithanda nje nokuhlaba?”

“Asazi ke”.

“Impungutye zona aziyi emizini?”

“Ziyaya, kodwa azide zingene ezintlanti, kwaye azihambi zininzi njengani”.

“Ndilindenii apha. Asikwazi kwenza mpendulo sisedwa”, watsho uMthendevu.

Wayeselephawule ukuba abantu beze ngoxolo. Uhambe engena ezindlwini ebiza izinja, noBhaku owayeselehlalele kude wamkhweba. Zaphuma zonke. Kwakukho ezazimanyonywana zingasafuni kumjonga umntu. Wazichazela into ezelwe ngabantu. UBhaku wazibonakalisa ukungakholelwa kwinto ethethwa ngamadoda. Ema kwinto yokuba izinja aya kuziphatha kakuhle, njengabantu.

“Nizisaphi kaloku izikhali?” wawabuza uBhaku.

“Siziphathele ukuba sikwazi ukuzikhusela xa sihlaselwa”, yamcacisela inkosi yakhe endala.

“Sinokwazi njani ukuba anenzi yelenqe lokuya kusigwintela emizini yenu?”

“Ninokuya nakuwuphi na umzi, nibuze ukuba sithunywe ngobani na apha, phezu kwaziphi na ingongoma”.

“Amathambo atyiwa ngubani ngoku singekhoyo?”

“Atyiwa sithi bantu. Uyazi nawe Bhaku ukuba yayingenini nedwa ababehleza”.

“Niza kuyeka na ukuthi xa nisinika ihleza niqale nilimfifithe liphele amafutha?”

“Amathambo niza kuwafumana ephuma embizeni enenyama zawo”.

“Amaxhego aza kuyeka ukuqongqotha umongo?”

“Hayi, akazi kuyeka. Aza kutya umongo wamathambo awabelweyo”.

“Xa kutyiwa emgidini siza kudityaniswa nabantu nokuba siza kuba nesabelo esisodwa thina zinja?”

“Asikhanga siyiphathe leyo indawo kwimbizo ebesinayo, kodwa andikholwa ukuba singadityaniswa nani”.

“Kutheni?”

“Ukhe ubone nawe xa kulawulwa izizwe emgidini”.

“Ewe”.

“Isitya sesizwe esithile siba sodwa ncesinnye isizwe sibe sodwa. Kanti nokuba sesisisizwe esinye siya hlelana. Nani ke kuya kunyanzeleka ukuba nibekwe ngokobuzwe benu”.

Zavuya izinja zakuva ukuba abantu baza kuziphatha kakuhle. Kwakuqondakala kwasentethweni apha yazo ukuba cyona nto ziyikhalazela ngamandla ebantwini kukuvinjwa kwazo ukutya. Indawo yokuhlala noko zazingayikhathalele kakhulu.

“Mandithi ke, ukuba siyavuma ukubuyela emizini yenu, iinkokeli esesinazo apha ziya kuthini?” wafuna ukuqonda loo ndawo uBhaku. “Hayi kaloku aninakuthi nisemhlabeni wethu nasemizini yethu nibe neenkosi zenu. Kwizinto ezinxulumene nomthetho wobuzwe niya kuva ngathi”, yacacisa inkosi yakhe endala.

Izinja zithe mabakhe bemke abantu ziza kukhe ziwuphicothe umcimbi lo babeze ngawo xa zizodwa.

“Singabuya nini ukuza kuva ukuba niyavuma na ukubuya?” yabuza inkosi kaBhaku endala.

“Yizani ngomso omnye”, wabaxelela usuku uMthendevu, “kuba ngomso yeyona mini siya kuyixikixa ngayo le nto. Phofu siza kulala sikhe sayivandlakanya”.

“Ze nise ninceda, Mthendevu, noyokuzibikela zonke izinja ukuba besize kunilanda. Asinakuba saya kwamanye amahlathi”. UMthendevu wathi baya kuzama ukuba baye kuzo ukwenzela ukuba zibekho nazo xa kuthethwayo. Amadoda asondela ngasezibayeni ezazakhiwe zizinja. Nangona ayengazanga azibuze nto ngomzi wazo, othuka akuwubona. Athi akukhangela phakathi kuzo afika kukho umgquba.

“Iigusha zethu nakanjani na zilapha”, yaqiniseka inkosi kaBhaku endala. “Kufuneka siziyeke nokuba sidibene nazo endleleni, sithi ezinjani zibokuze zibuye nazo mhla zigodukayo”.

Bahambile ke abantu, zaza izinja zashiyeka zixoxa zodwa. Zaphantse ukuxabana ukufika kukaBekelentloko owayengekho, kuba wazibuza ukuba kutheni ukuze zibaphendule abantu engekho yena eyenye yezinja ezindala. Azamsa ngandlela nezazivana naye.

“Ubungena kuze uthethe ngohlobo abathethe ngalo oBhaku no Mthendevu”, wamxelela uXhonti. “Ubungacingi”.

Ingqondo yakhe naye yayisel’isemizini njengezinye izinja.

“Ningathini, Mthendevu, ukwakha umzi nzima apha zeniwushiye wodwa, nisukele ukuya kuhlala kweyabantu?” wafuna ukuqonda uBekelentloko.

“Kukho umahluko phakathi kwalo wethu neyabo?”

“Hayi, awukho”, waphendula uMthendevu. “Nantsi le nto njengokuba besisilwa nabantu, ngoku kuyacaca ukuba siboyisile, Ke, masibe phakathi kwabo njalo bazokuyeka ukumane beziqlhayisa ngokuba bona bangabantu abanakuzilinganisa nezinja. Xa sihleli ngokufanayo sisebenza ngokufanayo baya kusazi ukuba nathi sinengqondo njengabo, kuphele ukusoloko besidelile”.

“UKholisile eneenkani enje angahlle avume na ukuphatha izinja njengabantu emzini wakhe?”

“Andikhanga ndive ke bethu ukuba yena yedwa akafuni zinja. Inkosi kaBhaku endala ngeyisichazele”.

“Xa nibonile ukuba manibheke emizini hambani. Imeko yakhona sendoyiva ngani”.

“Uza kusala nabani apha, usenzani khona?”

“Andoyiki ukuhlala ndedwa apha ndiyinja, kwaye ndiza kwenza le bendikade ndiyenza”.

“Hayi, Bekelentloko, akunakusala”, wala uMthendevu. “Walwa nabantu nawe. Ukuza kwakho apha ehlathini kwacacisa ukuthi wawumento owawungayithandi ebantwini ekwakufuneka beyilungisile. Abantu bangamangaliswa xa sinokuhluzana xa sisiya kubo, Nditsho ndisithi ke nawe mawuwazuze amalungelo xa ithuba livuma”.

“Hayi, ke, Mthendevu, ndiza kufumane ndiyekelele”, wavuma ukuhamba uBekelentloko.

“Andiqondi ukuba kusekho into esingabuye siyithethe ngoku”, watsho uMthendevu. “Ilizwi linye lithi siyathanda ukuphindela emizini yabantu. Sesolinda abantu ngolo suku baya kufika ngalo. Ngomso siya kusuka siye kuxelela ezinye izinja ngodaba oluza nabantu”.

UBhaku nogxa wakhe uMthendevu baya ezindongeni kusa-kugqitywa ukuthethwa. Kwakungekho nanto babeye kuyifuna bechitha nje isithukuthezi. Beve kukho into ethimlayo kanti ziimbuzi zitya igwanishe. Bathi besakuzibona babekeka emva kwazo bezisukela. Babulala yanye. Inja engazanga ibambe mbuzi nguBhaku. Wayeba ngazama ukuyibamba leyo wayeyisukela isuke iphuncule asale umlomo wakhe uzele uboya. Athi esakuyivelelea ngaphambili ingile ayokuwa. Wabona ukuba makaseyiyeka. Basebebheka emzini wabo ke noMthendevu naleyo babeyibambile imbuzi. UXhonti ukhe wababuza ukuba kutheni na bebulala impahla nje abantu bezama uxolo. Akwabikho mpendulo ngokungathi bathi siya kuthi siphindela emizini sibe sizanelisile ngezinto zabo.

Izinja zaya kumahlathi ngamahlathi ngokwesicelo esasenziwe ngabantu. Nalapho kuwo samkeleka isicelo sabo. OMthendevu basebesithi mazisezisiza kubo zonke izinja ukulalisela usuku ababeza kubuya ngalo abantu. Zazininzi izinja ezazikwamanye amahlathi ngaphandle kweli lalinoBhaku. Zona zaya kuwo ngokubaleka ukuhlaselwa. Zazingafani noTawuse ngokucinga. Imizi le yabantu zaziythandela nje ukonwaba zingakhathali nokuba zihleli ngokwendala indlela. Endingazi ukuba kuphi na ukonwaba kungekho lungelo. Phofu iyenzeka into yokuba ithi indawo le nokuba injani na isukeinja iyiqhele ingabi safuna yimbi. Zakha zazingela izinja ngosuku olungaphambili kokufika kwabantu. Zazingasakhathali nokuba iinyamakazi zithini na zisimka kakade. Imivundla zayibamba lula. Yayingasazibaleki izithembile ukuba azinakuze ziyenze nto. Abantu abazange bazaphule izigqibo zabo, baya kutsho ezinjeni. Namhla bazibulisa bezibuza nempilo.

“Naba ke, abantu ebesibalindele, zinja”, waxela uMthendevu.

“Qhuba, Mthendevu,” watsho uXhonti.

“Hayi, bantu!” wahambisa wenjenjalo, “siyathanda ukuya kuhlala nani. Kodwa nizigcine izithembiso zenu. Ndifuna ukugqonda kuni ukuba singaphindela nini na emizini”.

“Besinokukholwa nokuba beningagoduka ngomso”, yaphendula inkosi kaBhaku endala.

“Siya kufika ngomso ke. Nize nincede nisihlinzeke”.

“Siya kuzama ngazo zonke iindlela ukuba ningafikeli endlaleni. Zese nihamba nazo, bahlobo bethu, iigusha ezikhoyo apha.

Nizishiye nje ethafeni nina ningade nizise emakhaya. Ziya kusezinqandwa ngamakhwenkwe”.

“Akusekho zigusha apha. Nezo sasizama ukuzifuya zaqhwe-sha”.

Izinja nyani zazingasenagusha, zizityile. Umgquba lo wawubonwe ngabantu ngowezo zazikhe zanazo. Zabakhapha ke abantu. Kwakusekukho umoya omhle phakathi kwabantu nazo. Zazihamba zimana ukubaxhumela, iyindlela yazo ukubonakalisa ububele leyo. Zazibuza nendaba. Zakuba zijikile uMthendevu wathi:

“Mzi wakwanja! sisethubeni lokuba sibheke kwiindawo esavivela kuzo. Kukho into endingayaziyo embi. Ithi inja xa ibikhe yaphantsi komutu ingavumi kwahlukana nezinto cyayikade izenza nangona ingasanyanzelwanga ukuba mayizenze. Musani ukuba nengqondo enjalo. Ukususela ngomso ningakhe niphinde nibavumele abantu benze nokuba yintoni na kuni. Nize nibabeke xa bebonakalisa ubulungisa nentlonipho, kodwa ukuba bathe abazenza izinto abebethe baya kuzenza, zenibashiye umphelo”.

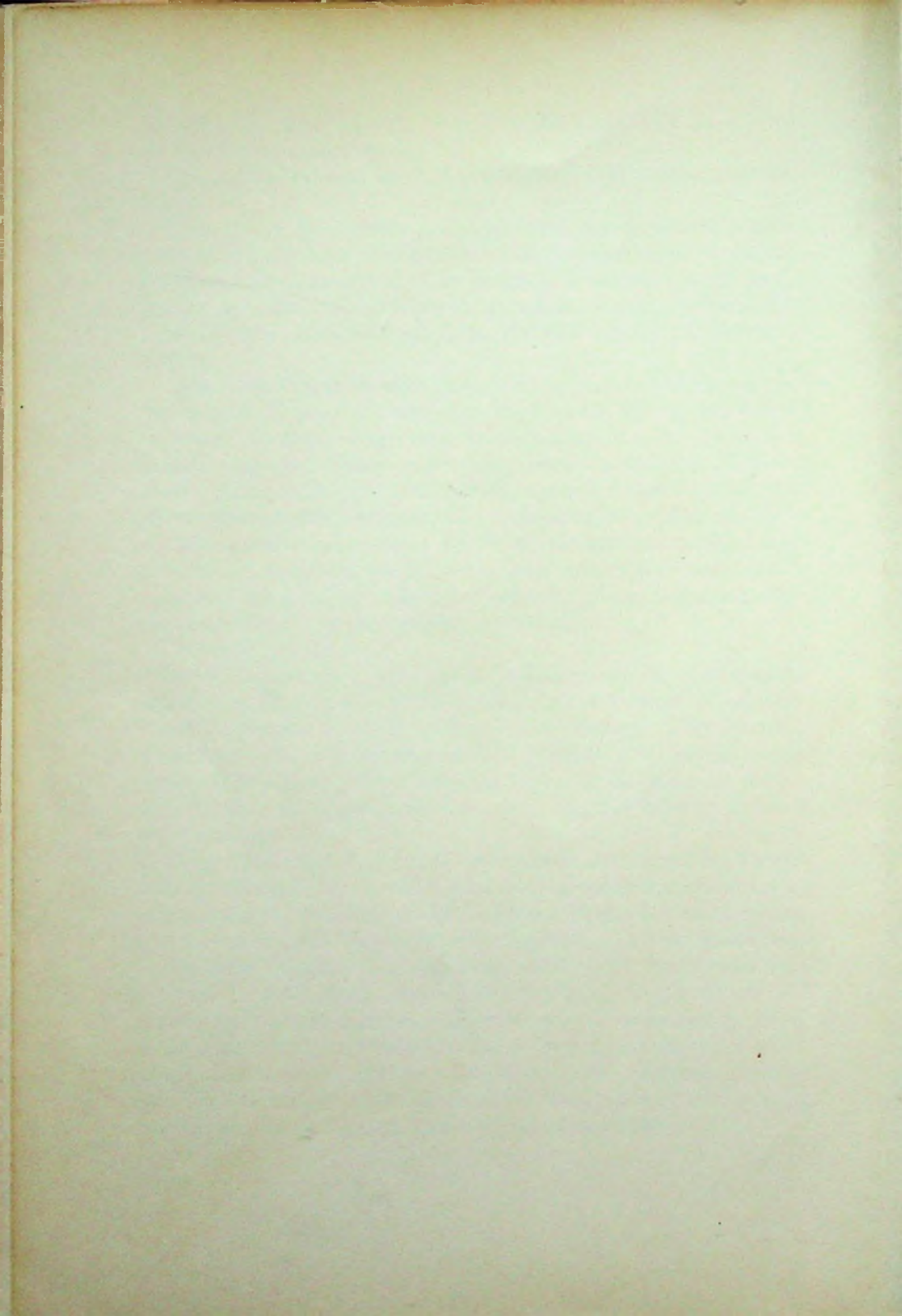
Usuke watsibatsiba uZonele wabheka phaya. Zakumjonga izinja zaphawula ukuba uphethwe yimincili.

“Hewu!” zamhewula.

Weza kuzo wamana ukuzigila. Zadlala zonke. Yayise yingathi akuzi kusa kuzo zizokubona inguqulelo eza kwenziwa luluntu. Kukho ckwasa zingazanga zibuzuze ubuthongo. UMthendevu wazibiza zonke izilwanyana zehlathi phambi kokuba bahambe, wathi maze umzi wabo ziwugcine baseza kube babuye. Wayefuna ukuba bathi besakungalungelwa emizini babuye indawo yabo isalungile.

Zindulukile ke izinja zisiya emakhayeni azo amadala. Zahlukana ngaphandle kwehalthi. OMthendevu babexhinile nakwindawo enyukayo. UBekelentloko noBhaku bajika besakuba semva komzi wakowabo. Baqala bacotha ngoku noTawuse noXhonti.

“Sezikho”, itshilo inkwenkwana kaKholisile besakuvela ezindlwini oMthendevu, ekubonakala ukuba kwakuthiwe ize ibakhangele ukuza kwabo. UXhonti wema endleleni emamele into engaba iza kuthethwa kubo. Babulisa enkwenkwaneni apha, babuza ukuba uphi na uKholisile, yathi yona ungasebuhlanti. Wazihlekahlekisa uKholisile akubabona, ebakhohlaniisa kuba kwakuzele inqala nempindezelo ngaphakathi kuye.





XHOSA